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MARTYN OF FENROSE;

OR,

THE WIZARD AND THE SWORD.

VOL. III.

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MARTYN OF FENROSE;

OR,

THE WIZARD AND THE SWORD.

A ROMANCE.

BY HENRY SUMMERSETT,

AUTHOR OF LEOPOLD WARNDORF, JAQUELINE OF OLZEBURG, &c. &c.

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MARTYN of FENROSE,

OR, THE

WIZARD AND THE SWORD.

THE extraordinary ſtory of Martyn of Fenroſe cauſed much converſation between William and Mercia; they thought with pity of his wrongs, and ſhuddered at his raſhneſs and approaching puniſhments. It was a moſt ſerious and impreſſive leſſon of morality to them; and, the evidences being ſo ſtrong and palpable, they could not ſuſ-

pect the truth of it. They however kept the myſtery to themſelves, fearing that the declaring of it would injure both their cauſe and reputation.

Remembering the appointment of Martyn, they went together once more to the cave, where they found the pale inhabitants in earneſt prayer. Martyn requeſted them to aid the ſupplications of the contrite; they accordingly bent their knees and devoutly implored of heaven an exerciſe of its mercies. They then aroſe—the woman retired, with her arms folded on her breaſt, and with dejected head; and Martyn welcomed the young men to his gloomy dwelling.

"I ought to make both of you," he cried, "my peculiar care, for, independent of your virtues, I have to admire your fortitude. I live in impenetrable obſcurity; no one perſon is acquainted

quainted with this cave, and had either of you, on your firſt entrance, ſhewn any deception or malice towards me, you might have wandered for ever in ſearch of me, and yet diſcovered me not. Oh, how I once loved, how I do ſtill love the confidence of man!—My own ſuſpicions and reſentments alone have drawn me into ruin and perdition!"

"You will riſe again," ſaid William, ſoothingly.

"Never!—The world ſhall rebound out of chaos firſt. Nothing can equal the horrors of deſpair—and no deſpair can be equal to mine. Oh, where have I to wander, and what to endure!—But let me neither terrify nor afflict you. I wiſh to talk calmly with you both reſpecting your rights, and the enemy who at preſent poſſeſſes them."

He ſat down, and they placed themſelves by his ſide.

"My approaching diſſolution," continued Martyn, "deprives me of much vigor and enterprize. I can no longer curb the ſpirit-ſteed—no longer mount, unſeen, the guarded rampart; and the ſword that ſlew de Stacey I have returned, with curſes, to the giver. I am already contemned by thoſe who were bound to ſerve me; and when they tell me of the near extinguiſhment of my power, I am agonized by their frightful ſhouts and rejoicings. My exertions will now ſcarcely go beyond thoſe of human nature; and I fear I can beſtow on you nothing but my advice. The cauſe of Alwynd is the laſt in which I ſhall engage; and being the cauſe of virtue, I mourn that I ſhall not ſee the termination of it."

"Then

"Then I have little to place my hopes upon," ſaid William.

"And I have nothing. Can wretchedneſs ſtretch any farther? I will venture to ſay, youth, that if ever the gifts of your abuſed father ſhall reach you, many difficulties and dangers will precede them. I cannot diſcover the preſent reſidence of Celwold, without reſorting to means, which, though formerly my ſport, are now deviliſh and diſguſting. I cannot clearly ſee your deſtiny, but can diſcover no early good. Yet droop not, ſon of Alwynd; rely upon the protection of him to whom virtue is ever dear—from whom my fatal vices have for ever eſtranged me. Had I known you ſooner, or rather had the battle of Bartonmere been fought at an earlier period, I would have fruſtrated the machinations of Celwold, and cauſed you to be proclaimed the lawful heir of the uſurped poſſeſſions.

But now there is only one ſhort ſtep between me and the frightful grave. William, I can do no more."

"The riches of my father I covet not ſo much as his name."

"None would reſpect you for poſſeſſing it, unleſs you could ſpeak without diſguiſe of your mother. And if any one ſhould charge you of illegitimacy, dare you avow yourſelf to be the ſon of Matilda? How the reſentments of her brother may ſtand I know not; were I ſituated otherwiſe, I would go to his court, and on my return tell you either to caſt yourſelf at his feet, or to ſhun him for ever. But now I have no time —no ſtrength—I am on the verge of a world of horror, and can think of ſcarcely any other thing than the next fatal ſtep. Let me, however, warn you to be cautious in all your proceedings. To alter the

the will would eventually deſtroy your reputation, and alſo endanger your perſonal ſafety; and as Lord Alwynd unguardedly calls you his ſon in it, I know not what ſatisfactory anſwer you could make, when your pedigree ſhould be demanded."

"I ſee, I ſee," cried William, "that caution will ever doom me to penury and obſcurity. But if I ſpurn her, and be ſpirited in my actions, loyal to my king, and brave in his defence, will he not applaud me for a true ſoldier, and deign to acknowledge me as the ſon of his ſiſter?"

"Valour is not rare in Britain, and as the king is grown too old to brave the dangers of war, it is impoſſible he ſhould witneſs your courage. Your merits are as likely to be neglected as reported juſtly, and ſhould the ſovereign be in-

leſs conſideration than his uneſtabliſhed name. If, when he impatiently ſpoke of going forth to redreſs his wrongs, ſhe turned her face towards him, he was ſoothed by the mild expreſſion of her eyes; and if, when he ſwore to puniſh the uſurper with his ſword, ſhe threw herſelf in fear and ſorrow upon his breaſt, all his reſentments were inſtantly quelled, and his ecſtacies diſperſed the bold intentions of which he had ſpoken.

Agatha alſo diſſuaded him from raſhneſs, and Lord Bartonmere calmly adviſed him not to act precipitately, but to wait till Mercia had, in ſome manner, adjuſted his concerns, before he thought of the more ſerious arrangement of his own.

"Conſider yourſelf," ſaid the hoſpitable baron, "as one more diſtant from neceſſity and the real cauſes of unhappineſs, than

than the greater number of your fellow beings. Your birth is pure and honourable. Your virtuous ſiſter will ere long become the happy wife of Mercia, and the lovely Mary is all that man can hope to find in woman, and will come to your breaſt an innocent and beauteous bride. I loved your father, boy, and you are dear to me. The joys of marriage I taſted but for a ſhort ſeaſon, and its pale bloſſom faded with the delicate plant that bore it. I have no wife—no child, and at my death, I ſhall leave no one to take up my title. This caſtle, William, and whatever it may contain, from that period ſhall be your's. Aſſure yourſelf of it, and all that I ſhall require of you will be, to love and reſpect me while I live, and to protect my poor and faithful ſervants, after they ſhall have followed their old maſter to the grave."

"Oh,

"Oh, my dear lord! This generosity—My prayers ſhall ever be that God will make your life both long and happy."

The Baron checked the effuſions of William, and led him to his friends, in order that the voice of gratitude might be ſtilled.

On the fourth day after his ſecond viſit to Martyn, Mercia was ſurpriſed by receiving a letter from Celwold, which informed him that he was returned to the caſtle, and ſummoned him to come thither, accompanied or alone, on the morrow, when the office of guardian ſhould be reſigned, and a ſtatement of his affairs laid before him.

"I call you to me," it was ſaid in the letter, "merely in the character of my ward,

ward, and would not have you presume to term yourself the injured son of Githa, a woman whose name is so infamous, that he who speaks it shall be dishonoured. She at present is lurking near us, and who would not cautiously shun so deadly a fiend? As the creatures of my charity were pleased to fly from it, tell them never more to return to me. Marry the out-cast girl as soon as you please. Her unknown father, though his visage may be thinned by fasting, and his garment formed of the shreds of beggary, will probably declare himself when he shall hear of the elevation of his daughter. I shall have many friends around me, for I know the fiery qualities of your brave spirit and shall treat with you accordingly."

"Tell your Lord," said Mercia to the messenger, "that I shall be with him at the hour he has mentioned." He then

then went to his friends, to whom he ſhewed the inſolent letter; and it was agreed that Lord Bartonmere and William, as well as ſix of their attendants, ſhould accompany him to Alwynd Caſtle at the appointed time.

"The villain fears me ſtill," he ſaid, "in ſpite of his contumacy, I ſee he does. But he deſcribes my mother as ſhe is, and I will not interfere in his concerns. Is it poſſible that ſhe is yet near to us? Let her, however, be cautious in her proceedings; for if ſhe attempt to diſturb my quiet, I will look on her with encreaſed abhorrence, and puniſh her as the vileſt of wretches. I almoſt forget humanity when I think of her; but I am pleaſed that Celwold will now perform what I have long wiſhed him to do. You, Lord Bartonmere, will for a few months act in his capacity; you, dear Agatha, muſt not

not object to the earlieſt day I dare fix for our nuptials; and you, William ——"

"Will ſay to Celwold, 'Reſtore, uſurper, to the ſon of Alwynd, his true inheritance, or your blood ſhall roll in ſtreams down the blade of his avenging ſword.' Turn not pale, ſweet girls! and do not overwhelm me with your tenderneſs. Would you have me live abjectly and in meanneſs, crouching for ſecurity, and fearful even of a coward? Does not the blood of Alwynd flow in theſe veins, and ſhall the channels be dried up by apprehenſion? Let an inſtantaneous checking of the languid tide rather make me quiet for ever. None of you were ſtrangers to the qualities of my father; none knew him more truly than you, Lord Bartonmere; and that he had courage, as well as virtue, I have many times heard you declare."

"He

none of the uſual forms of courteſy. On William he fixed his eye, and ſeemed to conſider his coming as an act of impertinence. The ſon of Alwynd was unabaſhed by this behaviour, but he could ſcarcely ſuppreſs his rage and indignation, as he approached the vile and contumacious thief of his birth-right. Mercia had alſo a fierce ſtruggle with his paſſions, and though he previouſly determined on appearing in a ſingle character, he could not baniſh his deteſtable mother from his memory, nor reſtrain the curſes that ruſhed towards the vile abettor of her infamy.

Celwold had many of his attendants around him. His ſteward was preſent, with prepared ſtatements of Mercia's property, and two of the neareſt reſiding noblemen were there as witneſſes to the tranſactions. Some conſiderable time

time was ſpent in adjuſting the buſineſs, on which the meeting had been formed; but at length the accounts were allowed to be perfect, and Celwold, with the conſent of a higher power, which had been previouſly obtained, reſigned his charge to Lord Bartonmere. He was then about to retire, but Mercia, ſtepping forward, prevented his deſign; and in a ſpeech of conſiderable length and great animation, taxed him with ſome of his hypocriſies and vices.

The young Earl was heard by the accuſed with many changes of paſſion. Celwold wiſhed to perſuade his friends that all the allegations were unjuſt and petulant—that he could ſuffer in their opinion only by miſrepreſentation—and that his endeavours to controul the obſtinacy and indiſcretions of youth, were the moſt ſerious offences the inconſiderate

derate minor could upbraid him with. He moved forward again after this poor extenuation, but was a ſecond time ſtopped, and William graſped him ſtrongly by the arm.

"Preſumptuous!" he exclaimed. — "Who is it that dare to offer me this new inſult?"

"Look on me," replied William, "and ſatisfy yourſelf. Have you no recollection of me?—Do you not know me?"

"Very well, ſir.—I know you."

"Then declare who I am—declare it aloud; and though I fear you have no innate principles of honeſty, and will act rightly only by compulſion, yet I will put you to the proof of it, by charging you

you to relate all that you know to appertain to me."

"Which would amount but to little," replied Celwold, "and which little, unfortunately for you, and though I haſtily ſaid I knew you well, would take from your reputation, rather than add to it. I am aſſured I ſhall not anſwer you to your ſatisfaction, yet I will ſpeak as you are ſolicitous. Of your name I know nothing — nothing of your family; but, whatever I may have heard you ſay to the contrary, I ſhould ſuſpect that neither of them would, if truly declared, procure you much reſpect. Lord Alwynd was a man whoſe prudence did not equal the charitable feelings of his heart. He was moſt bountiful to you and your ſiſter; and in his ſucceſſor, you would have found one willing to adminiſter to your neceſſities, had your pride

pride been leſs, and your humility ſuited to your condition."

"Open yourſelf more, prevaricating Lord. I am the ſon of Alwynd—you know me to be ſuch, and it is villainy to deny it."

"I have not yet prevaricated," replied Celwold, with affected calmneſs.—I have, indeed, often ſuſpected that he was your father, but I was acquainted with none of his amours; and though I have many times enquired, whether the daughter of any peaſant was known to be ſeduced, at a time preceding your birth, yet I have been able to diſcover only one poor object, whoſe ignorance and total deficiency of——"

"Silence, inſulting fiend!" exclaimed William, burſting into paſſion.—"I am the true and lawful ſon of the man whom

whom you have moſt villainouſly deceived. You know me to be ſuch. You have no title to what you poſſeſs—this caſtle and all the demeſnes belonging to it are my inheritance, and I will aloud aſſert my right. My father was incapable of committing ſo baſe a crime as you have alluded to; and my mother was honourable and virtuous."

"Indeed!—And her name, ſir?"

"Was Matilda."

Celwold ſtarted and turned pale, but he recovered almoſt in an inſtant.—"Had ſhe no other appellation?" he enquired, "ſomething, ſurely, ſhould follow, or what does it import?—From what family did ſhe deſcend?—Who were her anceſtors, and what her fortunes?—Beſides anſwering theſe queſtions, I could not only wiſh to ſee her pedigree,

pedigree, but alſo to be informed where and by whom the marriage was celebrated. There are many other proofs too, which muſt be eſtabliſhed before I can allow you to ſtep before me. Return to your home, and ruminate on the advantages to which your preſumption leads you."

"Have you no ſhame?" cried William.—"Devils would ſurely bluſh at ſuch ſelf-aſſurances. I have lately read a ſtory, which had previouſly been in your baſe hands. You know how I am ſituated, and would brave me into danger. But let me become deſpicable to all eyes, if I tamely ſit down with my wrongs, or ſuffer you to retain, without interruption, that which you ſhould yield up to me. I am the Earl of Alwynd—Lord Bartonmere and Mercia can honourably vouch it. Colwold, I have already told you the name of my father,

father, and now declare that my mother was——"

A loud, ſhrill noiſe was made at the door, and it ſeemed to proceed from ſome perſon calling an animal. "Fidelity!—Fidelity!" ſaid the voice. A man, with tattered garments and duſty feet, entered the room, and a large, wild looking dog bounded after him.

It was Martyn of Fenroſe. William and Mercia inſtantly knew him; but they ſaw by his countenance that he wiſhed them not to notice him. He held a paper in his hand, and went towards Celwold, who expreſſed as much ſurpriſe and horror as if the grave had given up the body of his father.

"Why do you ſtart, Baron?" enquired Martyn, "why are the changes of your colours ſo many?—Did I not tell you I

was assured I should return with the papers, the loss of which made you so frantic?—Aye, but I had a long and horrid journey for them!—Nothing under heaven should induce me to go the ways of peril and darkness again. I have lost much time, and my reward must be encreased. My wife and children, if living, are anxiously expecting me; if dead——Come, my reward, my reward."

Celwold would have given half his wealth to be repossessed of the papers; but he was afraid to claim them in the presence of so many people, and looked significantly at the adventurer, as if he wished him to retire.

"What!" cried Martyn, in an impassioned voice, "after all my difficulties and dangers, my weariness and long fastings, am I to be cozened and defrauded of

of that for which alone I undertook to ſerve you?—I will not bear ſuch uſage! You judge of my ſoul by the texture of my garment; but you ſhall find—— No, your mind is too poor and ſorry for great eſtimations. I will not be injured twice with impunity; and once already I have been by you—you, who would corrupt on terms which are no inducement to the moſt abject agents of villainy. If the ſon of the late Lord Alwynd be preſent, let him ſhew himſelf, and I will put into his hands the ſecreted will of his father."

"He ſtands before you," ſaid William,—"he now ſpeaks to you."

"Thus, then, I fulfil my promiſe. Take it, ſhew it to the world, claim your hereditary rights, and puniſh your enemy as he deſerves. Having been ſent in ſearch of this paper, and after

much difficulty found it, I diſcovered that my employer's baſeneſs was deep as the chaſm in which it was buried. I will toil for none ſuch.—But for men like you my feet ſhould bear me over deſerts, and my brow ſweat during a whole ſummer. There, there, I have performed the duties of an honeſt man, and will now renew my journey."

"Villain and impoſtor!" cried the perturbed Celwold, "your forgeries will not paſs."

"Your name will paſs to infamy," ſaid Martyn.—"My truths ſhall be eſtabliſhed, and Alwynd's ſon be no leſs honoured than his father. Room for my dog, baſe Lord! he is an honeſter creature than you are."

Martyn then went out, and William, who, as well as Mercia, had conquered his

his ſurpriſe, ſhewed the will to all who wiſhed to look at it. Some believed, others doubted; and Celwold trembled with fear and reddened with rage. He execrated all thoſe who had come from Bartonmere, called them villains and impoſtors; and then, defying their malice and artifices, ruſhed out of the room, and refuſed to come forth again.

Lord Bartonmere reproached him as he departed—Mercia looked at him with contempt and deteſtation—and William told him to make ſpeedy preparations for yielding all his ill-acquired poſſeſſions, and fraudulently obtained riches. They then quitted the caſtle, and returned to the impatient Agatha and Mary, who rejoiced that the buſineſs on which Mercia went had been ſo quietly adjuſted; and hoped that William's affairs, though they were intricate

and ravelled, would at ſome future period be ſatisfactorily arranged.

The unexpected appearance of Martyn cauſed much private converſation between the young friends, who had left the papers, which were brought by him to Celwold, in a cabinet at Bartonmere Caſtle. They went the next day to his cave, but as they could diſcover neither him nor his wife, they returned in diſappointment.

A few happy days ſucceeded the contention, and Mercia moſt truly rejoiced at the alteration of his circumſtances. He turned towards Lord Bartonmere with reſpect and gratitude; and gazed on Agatha with the eyes of encreaſing love.

"My vexations are already nearly forgotten," he ſaid to the latter, "and the proſpect

proſpect to which I am looking is rich and ſmiling. I have no longer any diſtruſts, for I have done with Celwold and my mother for ever. I cannot believe but that ſhe is again ſpreading her levities in France. Near or aſunder ſhe is nothing to me; let all the ſhame pertaining to her conduct reſt on her alone. He lives not that ſhould twice reproach me with her abandoned actions. To me ſhe firſt behaved like one who never had humanity, afterwards with all the inſolence of vice; and our poor Mary ſhe has not treated with half the tenderneſs of brute inſtinct. The inſults which ſhe offered to you, would alone cauſe me to execrate her."

"Paſs her to forgetfulneſs," ſaid Agatha, "and turn to ſome other ſubject."

"To the ſubject of my love then let it be; that I could dwell on for ever."

"Aye, but not without wearineſs, Mercia. Mary ſays it is a topic which, though never exhauſted, is made fatiguing by its unwearied repetitions and familiarity of images."

"I have nothing to do with her opinions, they muſt go over to your brother. I confeſs, however, that I have little novelty to offer you at this time; and though you may accuſe me with ſameneſs, you ſhall have no cauſe to cenſure my prolixity. All I wiſh is now to fix a certain time for the conſtancy of your lover to meet its ultimate reward; and that, on the day my friends ſhall come to congratulate me on the ceaſing of my minority, you will allow me to lead you among them, and to ſay,—'Felicitate me alſo on this my moſt precious attainment."

"The love of Mercia, and the ſmiles of his friends, I ſhall joyfully receive."

"Oh,

"Oh, happineſs!" cried Mercia, "ſurely my preſent knowledge of you is perfect. Agatha, what delight it will be to dwell with you in retirement; what pleaſure to ſhew you as my wife to thoſe who can juſtly eſtimate your virtues and beauty. I have an expectation of the moſt joyful events, and while my debaſed mother lives without reſpect, and Celwold frets and curſes his foiled ambition in obſcurity, I hope to ſee you ſmile in the court of my king, and to be regarded by him as the offspring of his departed ſiſter."

"Ah, that hope is fallacious! Think of the fears of my beloved father."

"They were impoſed on him by the affection and tenderneſs of his unfortunate wife. But, admitting that reſentment ſtill travels with time, there can be little to dread if we are ſecret and unaſpiring.

Whatever may be the fortune of my friend, it ſhall not ſeparate him from me. We will live, and our children ſhall grow up together; and when death comes among us, our tears ſhall be dried, and our ſighs ſuppreſſed, by the tender conſolations of the ſurvivors. But ſee, Lord Bartonmere, William, and Mary approach us. Agatha! Bleſſed be the hour in which we firſt met, and happy all the days that are to come."

William frequently held converſations in ſome degree ſimilar to the laſt, with the woman of his choice, whoſe artleſs manners were captivating as her beauty. It was agreed that he, whether he ſucceeded or failed in ſecuring his rights, ſhould go with Mercia and his ſiſter before the prieſt, and at the ſame time take the lovely Mary as his wife. He knew the generoſity of Mercia's heart, and alſo that it would never be ſuſ-

pended.

pended. The young Earl had not merely promiſed to beſtow on Mary an ample gift, but alſo made arrangements for her reſiding with him; and whatever favours he might thereafter grant, William had only to take as the free will offerings of an affectionate brother.

At this time he was aſſured, that he ſhould feel many pangs, if he were for ever excluded from his paternal home; but hope whiſpered that juſtice would interfere in his behalf, and yet obtain for him the former inheritance of his honourable forefathers. Agatha would indulge no ſuch expectations; ſhe thought the villainy he had to cope with, much ſtronger than it actually was, and one evening they were ſeriouſly diſcourſing on the ſubject, when they were interrupted by the entrance of a lad, who had been brought up in the caſtle by the humane Lord Bartonmere.

The

The boy was about fourteen years of age, handſome and animated. Misfortune had firſt recommended him to Lord Bartonmere, who regarded him with kindneſs, cauſed him to be educated, and frequently expreſſed an affection for him. A peculiar ſort of gratitude pertained to Oſwy, and he made it known in terms which were not uſed by the vulgar. It was augured that his talents were of no common order. Complaints indeed were frequently made by the ſervants of his pride and ſpirit, but his patron conſidered them as ariſing from prejudice, and was ſometimes led into anger, by accuſations which he believed to be unjuſt.

Agatha and Mary had in frolic, called him their page. He loved their ſociety better than that of the men, and was ever ſtriving to obtain their notice. He talked

talked with livelineſs and fancy, recited the tales of the bards with ſpirit and correctneſs, gambol'd like the ſon of ſport, and ſung both with art and ſimplicity. He came into the room haſtily, and was running up to Agatha; but when he ſaw her brother ſitting by her ſide, he ſtopped, turned his face towards the ground, and begged that his intruſion might be pardoned.

"What have you to ſay to me, Oſwy?" ſhe enquired, "is it a ſecret that muſt not reach my brother?"

"Yes, madam—no, madam—I had ſomething to ſay—ſomething to ſhew you—but ſome other time—when you are alone——"

"Oh, never mind me, young ſir," ſaid William, laughing at the boy's embarraſſment,

embarraſſment, "pray make your aſſignation freely."

"I hope to-morrow evening will be fine," ſaid Oſwy, with more confidence, "that neither you, nor a certain lady of the caſtle, may be diſappointed in the propoſed ramble through the wood."

"Fairly retorted, upon my honour, William," cried Agatha, taking hold of her laughing page's hand, "but tell me, Oſwy, what you were going to ſay, or rather what you wiſhed to ſhew me."

"Two ſhipwrecked wretches," replied the boy, ſinking into inſtant dejection—"two ſhipwrecked wretches, ſheltered in a hovel near the ſhore on which they were caſt. Oh, it is a piteous ſight! The old man has loſt his only ſon—his daughter, her lover.

lover. I have carried them food from the caſtle, but when I come near to them, I feel ſo ſad and melancholy, that I ſtop till my heart grows lighter, before I can enter into their comfortleſs dwelling."

"And how bears the girl her miſfortunes?" enquired the deeply intereſted Agatha.

"As one, Lady, who has a wandering, but painful remembrance of them. The old man ſtrives to ſolace her on his breaſt, and while ſhe lies in his arms, he raiſes his tearful eyes to me, and ſays, 'alas, boy, my daughter is mad!' Ah, it is melancholy! I wiſh you would remove them to the caſtle."

"They ſhall be taken care of," ſaid Agatha, "what are the appearances of the wretched girl?"

"You

"You plucked a lily yeſterday, while I was with you in the garden; and the rain, you know, had bent it to the earth. I can compare her to nothing but that flower. I took ſome food to them this morning. In my way I met with Adela, who had ſtrayed from the hovel, and was dreſſing the fancied grave of her drowned ſailor with the green ſea-weeds. The tide was coming in, and I trembled leſt it ſhould ſweep her away. I therefore went to her, though I was much afraid, and led her to her father, who, after long watching, had fallen aſleep. I awoke him, told him where I had diſcovered Adela, and received from him the greateſt reward he could beſtow—a poor man's thanks, a wretched father's bleſſings."

"Shew us the way, Oſwy," cried Agatha, "we will go with you."

"And,

"And, if you wait a minute," ſaid William, "I will aſk Mercia and Mary to accompany us."

"Oh, I will ſpare you the trouble," ſaid the page, "I will look for his Lordſhip and his ſiſter myſelf, and requeſt them to go with us to the poor mariner."

The boy went out, and returning almoſt immediately, ſaid, that their intention had been anticipated, and that Lord Mercia and Mary were actually gone to remove the ſufferers to the caſtle.

"But let us walk briſkly," he added, "and we ſhall ſoon overtake them, for Reginald, the ſteward, tells me, that they are but juſt gone, and have taken ſix of the ſervants, to bring the poor old man hither in a litter."

Oſwy

Oſwy threw on his hat, and went out of the room, followed by thoſe who commended his pity, and were anxious to relieve the objects of it. He ſaid the diſtance to the hovel was more than a mile, but as two hours had to precede ſun-ſet, and the evening was remarkably fine, Agatha ſtept lightly over the meadows, anticipating the pleaſure ſhe ſhould enjoy with Mary, in affording comfort to the diſtreſſed. William talked with Oſwy as they went forward, and promiſed to make him a preſent on the morrow for his humanity; but the boy looked as if he wanted no reward, and ſought for the ſmiles of Agatha, rather than the commendations of her brother.

The breeze came lightly over the ſea, and ſported with the glaſſy locks of Agatha. They were not able to overtake thoſe who had preceded them, and

and came within view of the hovel, without obtaining a ſight either of Mary or Mercia.

"They have been too briſk for us," ſaid Oſwy, aproaching, "but, in the cauſe of affliction, who is ever more prompt than the noble Earl? Only point out diſtreſs to his notice, and he will haſten to alleviate it. Tell him where miſery complains, and he will ſeem to borrow the wings of angels to fly and ſolace her. I think I can ſee him employed at this moment. He preſſes the hand of the miſerable father, ſtamping on it ſweet aſſurances. He raiſes the diſtracted Adela in his arms, imploring Heaven to reſtore her to health and reaſon. Excellent Mercia! Enter, Lord William—enter my dear miſtreſs."

He puſhed aſide the door of the hovel and ruſhed into it, His admiring companions

companions followed quickly, and while they were looking for the expected mariner and his daughter, ſix armed men darted upon them. Four of them laid their hands on William, and bound him with cords evidently prepared for the purpoſe; and the other two ſecured Agatha in their arms, but offered her not the inſult that had been impoſed on her brother.

So inſtantaneous was the attack, that it almoſt ſeemed to have been effected by magic. William could not reſiſt the force of his enemies; Agatha ſhrieked and became nearly inſenſible, and Ofwy ran up to a man, who ſeemed the principal in the conſpiracy, and from whom the unblushing imp received a purſe, apparently filled with gold. The ſurpriſe of William changed to horror; he ſtrove to ſeize and puniſh the early ſon of vice and perfidy, but his attempt

tempt was vain. The urchin laughed at the impotency of his enemy, and ſported with the purſe that had been given to him.

William was diſtracted by the ſituation of his ſiſter, and he entreated her detainers to uſe her with gentleneſs and decency. He found, that to ſtruggle with thoſe who had the charge of him, would be an uſeleſs exerciſe of his ſtrength, he therefore did not exert himſelf; but, with a loud voice and an undaunted ſpirit, he enquired by whom the baſe ſtratagem had been planned, and who was his enemy.

"Let your own conſcience tell you," replied the man to whom he had addreſſed himſelf.—"Think of the perſon whom you have moſt injured, and ſpare my anſwer."

"By

"By heaven," cried William, "I have injured no one!—I call God to witneſs that I have not!—That boy, whoſe complicated villainies fill me with wonder, muſt have deceived you. Oh, look upon my ſiſter!—She will die—ſhe will periſh!—Releaſe her, and do what you pleaſe with me."

"The lady ſhall not be injured, either by me or any of my party," anſwered the man; "but I am ſorry, young ſir, that you ſhould boaſt of virtue, when you do not poſſeſs it. If you were to live with me fifty years, you would not hear me proclaim any of my merits. You are moſt completely in our power—nothing can releaſe you; therefore I ſhall not ſcruple to confeſs, that your fate, hereafter, will depend on the will of Lady Mereia."

"Indeed!—

"Indeed!—Is ſhe our enemy?—That fiend, that harlot!"

"Beware—reſtrain your licentiouſneſs. Should ſhe be informed of this, ſhe would make you writhe in torture."

"I will not retract a ſyllable—I fear her not. What has urged her to this act of treachery?—What have I and my ſiſter done to be treated in ſo baſe a manner?"

"That you muſt aſk of our employer, when you meet her, ſhe has not commiſſioned us to enter into any explanations. That you have injured her, and baſely too, is no ſecret, for you have heaped calumny on her, and openly leagued with her enemies. She will be revenged for it, and I applaud her for it. Her means are precious. She can, if

ſhe

ſhe pleaſe, hide you in the cells of death; and that ſhe will do ſo is highly probable. But be aſſured that the lying daughter of Mortimer, and the tyrant ſon of my Lady, will never behold either you or your ſiſter again."

"Oh, Mercia! Oh, William!" cried Agatha, with uncloſing eyes, "ſave me—ſtretch out your hands to me—Let me not die for want of your aſſiſtance."

"Villains!" exclaimed William, "releaſe me inſtantly, and give my ſiſter to my arms. What, do you refuſe? God ſtrike you all with madneſs and death! Look at her—there is no blood in her cheeks, no motion in her heart—murderous fiends! Execrable Oſwy!"

"Away with them to the veſſel, and put to ſea inſtantly," ſaid the man who

who was at the head of the conſpirators. William and Agatha were carried to the beach, and placed on board a ſmall bark. They were both prevented from making any noiſe, and the beſtower of the purſe, having converſed for a few minutes with the corrupt page, came on board and unfurled the ſails. They immediately receded from the ſhore, and before William was forced into the cabin, he ſaw his young betrayer deriding his ſufferings on the ſtrand.

The inſtructed ſon of guilt gazed awhile on the veſſel, as it went from the borders of the ocean. He then returned in haſte to the caſtle, at the gate of which he took up a flint and wounded his hand. Making an outcry, he afterwards ran through the hall, drew a crowd of ſervants around him, and panting and bleeding ruſhed into a room where Bartonmere, Mercia, and Mary were ſitting

in expectation. They raiſed the frantic boy from the floor, on which he had thrown himſelf; and ſeeing the blood running from his hand, they enquired by whom he had been wounded.

"Oh, I dread to anſwer you," he cried, "put on your ſwords, Lords, mount your horſes, and fly to reſcue Lady Agatha and her brother, or they will be loſt to us all for ever."

Mary was almoſt petrified. Mercia ſtarted with aſtoniſhment, and haſtily demanded a further explanation.

"Let the grooms, then, prepare your horſes," ſaid Oſwy, "while I am telling you, in order that a ſingle minute may not be waſted. About the buſineſs, immediately, good fellows."

"Merciful

"Merciful God!" exclaimed Mercia, "what can be your meaning? Speak, Oſwy, or I ſhall die with apprehenſion."

"My Lord, I was walking with your friends, about an hour ago, near their favourite copſe. They were going to do an act of charity at the cottage of the man whoſe leg was torn by the ſickle, and which they had almoſt reached, when a party of men came from behind the trees, and inſtantly made them priſoners."

"Priſoners!" cried Mary, "oh my burſting heart!"

"The villains faſtened their hands with cords, and, with drawn weapons, bore them to a little diſtance. I followed ſhrieking; but they offered me no harm, till I threw my arms around my beloved Lady, whoſe agonies I

cannot deſcribe. One of the wretches then ſtruck me with his ſword. My terror was greater than my injury; and while I lay on the ground, I ſaw the monſters bear away their victims, place them upon horſes, and ride acroſs the heath, with a ſpeed almoſt incredible."

"Give me ſtrength, Heaven," cried Mercia, "and let me not ſink at a time like this. Lord Bartonmere, go with me; Oſwy, accompany us to the ſpot you came from, and point out the road which the raſcals purſued."

"I will my Lord; but as the party conſiſted of ſeven or eight men, it will be dangerous to go without attendants. They looked not like common robbers. After they had left me, I found this paper, which probably belonged

longed to one of them; but I had neither time nor inclination to peruſe it. Oh, my ſweet Lady! I fear I ſhall never more behold you."

Mercia took the paper with an agitated hand. It was addreſſed to "Bernard Aubrey," and ſtamped with the ſeal, as well as ſigned by the hand of the infamous Githa.

"My mind has not changed ſince I ſaw you on Thurſday," ſaid the *billet*.— "You will, therefore, convey your captives to the place I then mentioned, where I will be waiting to receive and puniſh them as they deſerve. Your reward depends upon your ſervices. The gold that comes with this may aſſiſt you in your journey. I only want you to deliver to me the objects of my hate; and the ſtation you wiſh for I will immediately allow you to ſtep into."

Mercia knew the writing of his mother. Almoſt diſtracted he ruſhed out of the room, accompanied by Lord Bartonmere, Oſwy, and ſeveral of the attendants. It was nearly dark. They inſtantly mounted their horſes, and rode to the ſpot on which the attack was ſaid to have been made. Having received the directions of the page, they ſet off with velocity, leaving the boy, and one of the ſervants, to return to the caſtle.

The ſituation of Mary was exceedingly diſtreſſing. Her tears flowed not, but ſhe was ſick at heart; the pain of her head was intenſe, and almoſt ſevere enough to bear away her reaſon. She gueſſed at the motives of Lady Mercia, knew the malice of her diſpoſition, the cruelty of her nature, and doubted not but the revenge of this inhuman mother would be full and ample.

She

She wondered that the ſavage woman had not alſo aimed at ſecuring her; and actually wiſhed that ſhe had been taken in the toil, rather than be ſeparated from her lover and friend. She apprehended that neither of them would ever be reſtored to her. There was miſery in the thought; and ſhe ſhook with encreaſed violence, while her head lay on the boſom of the ſinful page.

"Oh that I could conſole you!" cried the matchleſs hypocrite, "that I could place comfort in your fair boſom, and command it to abide there. But my efforts would be only mockery, and I muſt ſympathiſe in ſilence. The machinations of your mother will I fear prevail, for there is ſtrength and determination in the inſtruments ſhe has employed. Oh, heaven! if ſhe ſhould doom the lovely Agatha to death——"

"Oh, God!—Talk not thus, Oſwy,—my brain cannot bear it."

"It is, indeed, a horrible ſubject; but what is there not to be dreaded?—Had you ſeen them in the arms of their enemies!—Agatha, with a death-like face, was borne before, and her anguiſhed brother compelled to follow her. He could not exerciſe his bravery. He looked firſt on his inſenſible ſiſter, and then on me. 'Oſwy,' he ſaid, 'bear my love to Mary. Tell her I will ever implore the God of innocence to protect and bleſs her; that while I have life and reaſon, I will pray for her peace and felicity."

"Miſery and inſanity are both aſſailing me!" cried Mary.—"Boy, ſend my women after me—I am afraid of myſelf, of every body. William, Agatha, and Mercia! where are you all?—Oh, theſe tortures

tortures are too many and fierce for endurance!"

She ran to her chamber, and paſſed the night in agony. The morning broke upon her, and found her griefs encreaſing, for ſtill all was horror and uncertainty. Four days ſhe ſpent in a ſimilar manner. Almoſt aſſured of the irretrievable loſs of William and his ſiſter, the abſence of Lord Bartonmere and Mercia, led her to conjecture that they alſo had fallen into the hands of the villains whom they had gone in purſuit of, and been ſavagely ſlaughtered by them. To all who remained in the caſtle, circumſtances ſeemed ſo deſperate, that little conſolation was offered to Mary—none however ſhe could have received; ſhe ſecluded herſelf in her chamber, refuſed the attendance of her women, and found herſelf wholly unable to ſupport a con-

verſation with the boy who had brought to her the laſt words of her lover.

She often threw her eyes haſtily on the door, thinking that ſome meſſenger of good news was entering. She looked from her window, acroſs the heath, with the hope of diſcerning ſome of thoſe dear friends, who might yet ſurvive; and frequently ſat, ſtill as a ſtatue, to take in any ſound that ſhould announce the coming of travellers.

In the evening of the fifth day of her lonelineſs and deſpair, ſhe was rouſed from the lethargy into which ſhe was falling, by the trampling of horſes over the bridge. The party had gone ſo far that ſhe could not ſee it from her window; nearly breathleſs, therefore, ſhe ran down the ſtair-caſe, and entering the hall, ſaw Lord Bartonmere, with her brother leaning upon his arm. This

was

was ſufficient to convince her that they had been unſucceſsful, to encreaſe her miſeries, and plunge her in the depths of deſperation.

"They are murdered!" ſhe exclaimed, frantickly, "they are murdered, and we muſt be miſerable for ever!"

"Huſh, huſh!" cried Lord Bartonmere.—"Look at this object, your miſerable brother!"

She raiſed her eyes on Mercia, and ſaw him weak, pale, and inexpreſſive as idiotiſm. His features varied not—the wreck of his noble mind was viſible. He had a bandage on his head, which, ſhe now perceived, was ſtained with blood. She flew to him, claſped his ſenſeleſs hand, and pitying his condition, almoſt ſunk into it herſelf.

"Oh,

"Oh, this completes my miſery!" ſhe cried.—"Tell me, my Lord, what new calamities have befallen my brother?"

"Our ſearch," replied Lord Bartonmere, "has been ſo totally unſucceſsful, that we have not been able to obtain the leaſt intelligence of our betrayed friends. Your brother's afflictions have been many indeed; and I have with difficulty reſtrained him from acting deſperately. He had a fall from his horſe; and I fear the contuſion, and his extreme heat of blood at the time the accident happened, have ſeriouſly affected his brain. Oh, God! our joys of late were many; but the number of our misfortunes is now infinitely greater. Aſſiſt me in conveying this creature of affliction to his chamber; aſſiſt me, alſo, in recommending him to the immediate mercy of his Creator."

Mercia

Mercia was led away; but Mary, as ſhe went with him, was frightened by the inanity of his once noble face.

The caſtle now became a ſcene of general diſtreſs. The loſs of William and Agatha, as well as the ſituation of Mercia, was bewailed by every perſon; and even the guilty Oſwy felt many a pang, and turned repentantly from the hoarded gold, that had induced him to put his uncommon hypocriſies into motion, and to act with ſuch wanton cruelty and deceit. It was the firſt ſcourging of guilt, by the ſevere laſh of conſcience; the cords ſtruck hard and ſunk deeply, and, to avoid diſcovery, he, as much as poſſible, ſhunned the eyes of thoſe whom he had ſo ſeriouſly and inhumanly injured.

Mercia continued for a conſiderable time alarmingly afflicted, which cauſed Lord Fartonmere to dread that the ſeal of

not the generous hand that rears it—It periſhes, ſapleſs in its trunk, and with arms naked as thoſe of winter."

"And will my brother," ſaid Mary, "ſink, without exertion, beneath the ſtorm that blows on him? Has he ſurvived only to draw a heavier chain of affliction? Only to give me the bleſſings of a few ſhort days, when I had reckoned on thoſe of years, then,—then to depart from me in ſilence, which never can be broken, leaving me the ſad memorial of his grave! Oh, Mercia! thus preſſing you to my boſom, I conjure you, by God and his angels, to baniſh your deſpair, to drive out the gloomy objects of your mind, to hope——"

"Hope! There is nothing to fix it on. Mary, I ſhall never hope again. Where ſhould I place it?"

"See,

"See, how ſweetly ſmile the heavens above our heads! Place it there; for there mine is reſting. He who dyes the clouds with beauty, he who faſhioned man, and upholds him in this erring world, may yet ſend to us joys, the rapid ſucceſſion of which will make them countleſs. Though I have ſought for comfort, let me, dear Mercia! become your comforter. I will ſtill believe that William lives, that Agatha will be reſtored to us, lovely and uninjured as ſhe went."

"Her murdered body," cried Mercia, "may probably be ſent to me! Ghaſtly, in her ſhroud, I may ſtill behold her! But with life, with innocence and beauty ——Is not my mother her enemy? Does not that fiend triumph in her artifices, and have we not aſſurances of her paſt vices, ſufficient to make us think her capable of every crime, which thoſe who

who are more impotent than devils can commit? Where has she lodged her victims? She has no place of residence, she is only a wandering strumpet, that would defile the dwellings of the good. Her assassins have completed their work. Agatha and William have bled, and an unconsecrated grave has received their bodies. You grow pale, Mary; you join your belief with mine, and therefore must partake of my wretchedness."

In such conversations as these, and they were frequent, Mary could find little consolation. In the presence of her brother, she attempted to display a degree of fortitude and resignation, which she did not possess; but when no one was near to observe her sorrows, she endeavoured not to restrain them, and yielded to their pressure. Lord Bartonmere shared their distress; the restoration of the beloved children of Alwynd he no longer

longer expected. He frequently ſighed oppreſſively for their fate, and the return of every meſſenger he ſent to ſearch for the abandoned Lady Mercia brought him only grief and diſappointment.

His favourite, Oſwy, too, was loſt to him for ever; and, as his crimes were unknown, the unworthy boy was ſincerely lamented. A ſudden and painful death cloſed his early vices. Attempting one day to paſs over a foot bridge, that lay acroſs a neighbouring river, he fell into the ſwelling flood, and dreadfully lingered in ſuffocation till he expired. There were many in the caſtle who ſcarcely pitied his fate; but his patron deeply lamented it, and cauſed his body to be buried in a tomb, which recorded the event that occaſioned his death.

It was now winter, and the ſeaſon rigorous. It had been uſual to obſerve the

the chriſtmas feſtival, to fill the hall with muſic, to dance on the foot of frolic, and, with harmleſs mirth, make the roarings of the December ſtorm, and the bitings of the froſt unregarded and unfelt. The annual ſports, however, were ſcarcely thought of by any perſon in the caſtle, for the domeſtics ſaw the melancholy and dejection of thoſe whom they ſerved, and none of them were inclined to be untimely merry.

Mary grew pale as the falling ſnow; and Mercia was ſcarcely more than the ſhadow of a man. Health and quiet had gone away from him. From morning till eve he gazed around him with the almoſt rayleſs eye of grief, and while the undiſturbed ſlumbered in their beds, he frequently ſat and heard the patterings of the rain, and paced the battlements, though the blaſt was ſtrong, and the ſky frightfully black and portentous.

He

He walked his round unconſciouſly, telling to the rude elements the woes of which he bled, and looking like the unquiet genius of the night. He wanted ſpace to move in. His thoughts were ſo quick in ſucceſſion that they bred confuſion. It was with a wildneſs of recollection that he frequently called on William and Agatha, and he often poiſed in giddineſs over the parapet.

One morning his mind recurred to Martyn of Fenroſe, of whom he had for ſome time ceaſed to think. He believed that the recluſe could not be aware of the ſituation of William, as he had not evinced any deſire to extricate him from it.

He was now accuſtomed to ramble long and widely, without appriſing any perſon of his route. He therefore told no one of his intention; but, taking a ſtaff

ſtaff to try the depths of the ſnow, he departed from the caſtle in ſearch of Martyn's cave. In finding this, however, he had great difficulty. He had no track to guide him; he trod in fear of covered pits; and when, at length, he reached the dwelling of the wizard, it was with no inconſiderable degree of labour that he forced his way through the oppoſing thorns, which were bending beneath the weight of frozen ſnow. But he entered the firſt paſſage of the cold cavern, and called aloud on Martyn. The echo alone anſwered him. He ſpoke again only to liſten to mockery, and, with his heart ſtill loſing its warmth, went fearfully along the dark and ſlippery path.

His head often daſhed againſt the crackling icicles, that hung above it, and many times he ſtumbled over large ſtones, which were bound to the earth by the froſt. When he came to the cave

cave he looked around him, but all was emptineſs and deſolation. Inclement as the ſeaſon was, neither bird, nor beaſt had taken ſhelter there; and Mercia had walked nearly round the large and gloomy ſpace, when he diſcovered two bodies ſtretched upon the earth.

Theſe were the remains of Martyn and his wife. They had evidently died in the arms of each other, and no part of their faces, which preſſed the ground, was viſible. How long their breath had been ſuppreſſed Mercia could not tell; but, on touching their limbs, he found them cold and ſtiff, as if they had been modelled by the chiſel of a ſtatuary.

The previous knowledge he had of them conjured up ſome fears, which, for a while, were unconquerable; and he trembled leſt the dark power that had limited

limited their days, ſhould come ſuddenly upon him, and ſhut up the paſſages of the cave for ever. He wanted to fly from the horrid ſolitude, but felt like a man who dreams that he is aſſailed and ſpell-bound by a demon. The conſciouſneſs of innocence, however, ſoon cauſed him to be more firm and collected; and he took in the aſſurance, that wickedneſs might be embraced, but could not be impoſed.

He now looked on the proſtrate victims with leſs dread than pity; and virtue taught him ſome haſty leſſons while he ſtood over them. A broken ſword lay by the ſide of Martyn; his habit was torn, in a manner that beſpoke a ſtruggle with an enemy; and a glaſs, which had calculated time, ſtood ſhattered and emptied of its ſand near his head. But there were no appearances of blood; and though death had left behind him the memento

memento of his victory, it ſeemed that he had treated Martyn, as he had been accuſtomed to deal with all mortals, ſince he quitted the diſtorted body of his mother.

Mercia recollected that part of the wizard's ſtory, which related to the viſitation of the guardian of the night, and alſo what the ſpirit of good had been reported to ſay, in reſpect to the only ſigns by which the doom of the ſinful might be known after their breath had paſſed from them. It was with fearful heſitation and trembling limbs that Mercia ſought for evidences. He turned the body of the woman, and found it ſcarcely changed; he then looked more confidently on Martyn's, and diſcovered in it a larger ſhare of ſerenity than it had ever expreſſed while he was living.

"Praiſes to the God of heaven!" exclaimed Mercia, "eternal praiſes to him for his mercies!"

Believing that, the inhabitants being dead, any perſon had the power of exploring this receſs, he dragged the bodies to the darkeſt corner of the cave; and then returned, muſing on what he had ſeen, to the caſtle.

William and his ſiſter were confined three days in the veſſel, and the ſituation of the latter made her brother almoſt deſperate. With thoſe to whoſe power they had been compelled to ſurrender they very ſeldom diſcourſed; for the men, though not ſevere, were ſparing of their words, and brief when called upon to anſwer any queſtion. The waves were gentle, but the minds of the priſoners

ſoners tempeſtuous; and when they found, on the fourth day, that the veſſel was anchored, and were afterwards put into the boat to be taken on ſhore, Agatha clung ſtill cloſer to the breaſt of William, and ſhuddered with horror when ſhe thought of the vengeance of Mercia's inhuman mother.

Being landed, they were commanded, on pain of eternal ſeparation, to walk quietly, and without making either ſign or motion to any perſon whom they might chance to meet. The condition exacted obedience; and they went forward a conſiderable way, through meadows and coppices, when they came to a dwelling, in which they were commanded to enter. Oppoſition was fruitleſs, and Agatha privately entreated her brother not to make any; but when the gates cloſed on them, rage ſwelled the

breaſt of one, and fear ſhook the boſom of the other.

They were conducted through ſeveral unfurniſhed rooms, and at length ſhewn to one, which, they were informed, would for a while be appropriated to their uſe. It was an interior apartment, which, though ſomewhat dark, did not ſeem proper for the purpoſes of tyranny; and ſoon after they had entered it, proviſions and wine were brought in, and they were deſired to partake of them.

They had faſted long, and Agatha being faint and exhauſted, William offered her ſome refreſhment; but a ſudden fear of treachery entering his mind, he drew the liquor haſtily from the thirſty lips that were going to receive it. This action was obſerved by one of the men, who gueſſing the cauſe of it, not only took the bottle, and drank ſome of the

the wine, but alſo taſted the food that was on the table, in order to give aſſurance to William that every thing was fair as it appeared.

Two ſervants ſtood behind William and Agatha while they were appeaſing their long neglected appetites, but nothing that they ſaid in regard to their ſituation was anſwered; and after their repaſt the attendants cleared the board, and withdrew in ſilence. Left alone with her brother, the head of Agatha fell upon his ſhoulder, and ſhe ſobbed as ſhe repeated her fears of their being loſt to Mary and Mercia for ever.

"I entreat you, my ſiſter," replied William, "to diſmiſs your ſhocking apprehenſions, and to believe that we ſhall not long have any injuries to complain of. As yet we can ſcarcely ſpeak of violence; and I hope the returning ſenſe

He proteſted that no injury was deſigned againſt either of them, and that their accomodation would be regarded. He offered to ſhew them the chambers, which had been prepared for their reception, and gave them keys, by which they might make themſelves ſecure during the night.

"At preſent," he continued, "I command here. On the arrival of my ſuperior I ſhall not be accountable for any thing that may happen; but while I am in office, I ſwear, by my God, that I will act honeſtly with you. I ſhall like your confidence better than your ſuſpicions; truſt me, therefore, and you will not hereafter repent."

Agatha ſtill looked fearfully, but William, who had compared the man's voice with the tones of a natural ſincerity, and found no diſſonance, aſked him

him to lead on. He followed, with his ſiſter leaning on his arm, and entreated her to believe that their conductor's intentions were ſuch as he profeſſed.

They were firſt ſhewn to the room aſſigned to William, and afterwards to that which was to be uſed by his ſiſter. They were only a ſmall diſtance from each other, and nothing appeared in a doubtful light to either of them. William told the attendant that his profeſſions ſhould be relied on; he then took a lamp from the woman, and put it into the hand of his ſiſter, whom he wiſhed a good night, and, bending his knees, he devoutly prayed the Almighty to bleſs her.

The man ſeemed to enter into his feelings; but he was ſilent, and, bow-

ing to the youth when he returned to his chamber, he retired with the female.

William cloſed not his eyes till long after the break of day, but often went to the door of Agatha's room, and to ſoften her fears ſpoke ſoothingly to her. Theſe viſitations were moſt acceptable. After his firſt coming ſhe ſat liſtening for the ſucceeding ones, and if ſhe heard him not at the expected minute, ſhe left her bed, and applied her ear to the door, thinking that he might be groaning beneath the daggers of Githa's numerous bravoes. But when morning beamed on her, ſhe fell gently upon her pillow, and ſlept calmly till the hour of nine, when ſhe aroſe and flew into the arms of her loving brother.

That day went over, and they ſaw not Lady Mercia; a month ſucceeded, and

and the female tyrant yet abſented herſelf. Their accommodation was ſtrictly obſerved, but thoſe who waited on them became ſtill more obſtinate in their ſilence. It was from the ſuperior alone that they could draw any thing beyond monoſyllables, and even he was evidently beſt ſatisfied with his conduct, when his tongue was not called into motion.

William had not expected ſo long a captivity, and could ſcarcely ſolace his ſiſter with a ſingle hope. What Agatha had firſt anticipated ſhe now witneſſed; and what ſhe had feared ſhe now more ſtrongly dreaded. William offered to bribe the man, whoſe fidelity, he found, was not to be ſold. He alſo ſilently examined the place of his confinement, with the hope of ſtealing privately from bondage; but diſcovered that every attempt which he might

might make, would be attended by peril, and finally by diſappointment.

He ſaw, with agony, that health was rapidly flying from his ſiſter; he thought ſhe ſuffered much for want of air, and entreated the deputy of his foe to let her go abroad. This requeſt was not granted. He was told that it could not be done without perjury; but that he and his ſiſter were at liberty to walk in a large room, from which the country might be viewed. William haſtily accepted the offer, and aſcended the ſtair-caſe with the drooping Agatha. The man preceded them, they entered the large apartment, and William ran impatiently to the grated window.

He ſaw a wide proſpect, which even the lateneſs of the year had not made undelightful. His emotions ſubdued

ſubdued him, the flood of tenderneſs was not wholly to be reſtrained, and, with the tones of ſorrow, he exclaimed, "How long ſhall I be held in this debaſing—this undeſerved captivity?"

"Perhaps for ever," replied his conductor, "I ſhall leave you, ſir. When you pleaſe you may return to the apartment below."

"For ever!" cried William, "did you hear, ſiſter? For ever! Let me baniſh that thought of wretchedneſs and deſpair. Man can be happy no longer than he is free. What joy has it been to me to exerciſe my limbs in the early hours of morning, and to walk in the paths of nature, while from the breezes I drank the copious draught of health. The hills and valleys of Alwynd—Ah, how delightful!—The friendſhip of Mercia, the love of Mary—

Mary—Agatha, I ſhall grow wild, if I dwell on a theme like this; and yet my mind is not to be diverted from it. Our guard ſpeaks as he has been prompted. His revengeful miſtreſs will command the gate never to be opened to us, and here your exiſtence, as well as my own, will terminate. The eyes of thoſe whom we love took their farewel of us, before the execrable page aſſigned us to our ſlowly deſtructive enemy."

Agatha, fully believing this melancholy prediction, ſtood by the ſide of her brother, gazing with deep regret on the wide and unknown ſcene. They could form no opinion in regard to the name, or locality of the place in which they were impriſoned. It was evident that the building was not ſmall; and though it differed much from a fortified caſtle, yet there was

was great ſtrength in the walls; and a bridge and moat defended it. Its ſituation was retired, no road was near it, and the only edifices diſcoverable from the window, were two or three poor peaſants huts which ſtood in a diſtant valley.

To look at the external appearances of nature, was, in ſome degree, a pleaſure to the captives; and though it gave birth to many regrets, they were loath to depart from the window. At length, however, the ſun went down, the evening proved cold, and they returned dejectedly to the room, in which they had been accuſtomed to ſpend the principal part of their time.

Almoſt every day, during the enſuing month, they ſpent two or three hours in this apartment; and though the winter was growing ſharp, and the proſpect dreary,

dreary, they were unwilling to bid adieu to the only ſpot of earth on which they were allowed to caſt their melancholy eyes. They ſeldom ſeparated from each other, after they had riſen, till they retired to their beds; and one evening, while they were together, and after a confinement of nearly five months, they were ſummoned to meet the perſon under whoſe diſpleaſure they had fallen.

"Is the infamous woman come at laſt?" cried William, "then I will be ſatisfied. Lead us to her inſtantly, friend, that I may try the force of virtue, and ſee whether her guilty face can turn unbluſhingly towards mine. Why droops my ſiſter? Take hold of my arm, and go reſolutely with me. Think of your recent injuries, and let neither your father, nor your mother

ther be forgotten in a moment like this."

The man conducted them along a gallery, at the end of which was a richly furniſhed room. They went in, but found it empty; within a few minutes, however, they heard a noiſe at the oppoſite ſide, when a door was thrown open, and Celwold, with ſix attendants, entered to the aſtoniſhed captives. William ſtarted at this ſtrange and unexpected ſight; and Agatha ſhrieked, on diſcovering that they had fallen into the hands of an enemy more to be feared than Mercia's mother.

Celwold ſmiled triumphantly at the confuſion of the one, and the terror of the other. He approached them with deriſion; and William, who was flying, hot with rage, towards his in-

ſolent

ſolent foe, was ſeized by the guards, and menaced by their ſwords.

"You ſee the danger you incur by violence," ſaid Celwold, "your ſafety lies in quietneſs and ſubmiſſion; and I charge you on your life, to be reſpectful in your ſpeech, and tame in your actions. The ſword is ſuſpended, and let your own prudence caution you againſt its fall."

"I ſpurn the cautions of a villain," ſaid the undaunted William, "and deſpiſe him from whom they come, more than the fiend that ſhall hereafter laſh him for his deeds. You have made me a priſoner—but now I call on you to open the gates, and, if you value life, to let me go from hence this very day. I have ſinned againſt no man. On the names of yourſelf and the ſtrumpet widow of Mercia, ſhall be heaped loads of infamy,

infamy, even by thoſe whom the world ſhall know to be infamous."

"Puniſh the rude and inſolent boy," ſaid Celwold to his men, "ſtrike the audacious ſtripling!"

"Forbear!" exclaimed the frantic Agatha, "murderers, forbear! — Delay your vengeance for a while. There—now proceed as your ſanguinary paymaſter directs; now, while I hang on the neck of my brother, ſtab us both to the heart, and give the crimſoned trophies of the action to the wretch that covets our blood—to Celwold—to him whoſe crimes will ever hide him from God."

"Silence, ungentle girl, and do not provoke me further. Take your hands from them, fellows. I will truſt to their diſcretion. William, you may yet make me your friend; and, by means which I will

will propoſe, render yourſelf free, rich, and happy."

"Name them, name them," cried William.—"Yet ſtay, firſt tell me why you have called in the aid of Lady Mercia on this occaſion?—Why ſhe aſſiſted in bringing us into this diſgraceful condition?"

"She had no concern in it," replied Celwold, "I only borrowed her name, to aid thoſe intentions which I have fortunately executed. She knows nothing of you; and ere this ſhe has ſought for her former gallants in France. Oſwy was an admirable boy; and without his aſſiſtance my projects muſt have failed. He led you into the ſnare with a faſcinating eaſe; and he has ſince ſobbed for your unknown fate in the arms of Mercia, and on the downy boſom of his ſiſter."

"Oh,

"Oh, impious!" exclaimed William. "You know yourſelf to be the property of devils, and would not go ſingly into perdition. I will, at preſent, enquire no further—my heart has already ſickened at your crimes. Agatha, go with me, and look no more on that maſs of vice and ſin. Stand off, brutes!—If I remain with you any longer, it ſhall be in death. Take your foul hands from my innocent ſiſter. See, our tyrant ſanctions not your actions, therefore ſtretch not the poor authority of which you are ſo proud any further."

"Let them retire for the preſent," ſaid Celwold.—"William, I ſhall oppoſe neither your preſent deſires, nor thoſe of your ſiſter, my lovely captive. But in the morning you muſt ſee me again —I will then explain to you the motives of my actions; and I ſhould like it better

better if you were to come unimpaſſioned, and to talk amicably."

Neither of the children of Alwynd made any reply; they retired together, and Agatha had ſo many terrors in her boſom that ſhe reſolved not to leave her brother till the morning. Her fears encreaſed as the night lengthened, and ſhe looked for dangers and unavoidable inſults.

"Be more compoſed, dear Agatha," cried William, "and let not your anticipations diſtract you. I muſt, I confeſs, look with ſuſpicion on our foe; but I cannot think he brought us hither for the foul purpoſe of murder. What! torture and ſtain the boſom of my ſiſter! —No, no, I will not believe it. I wonder at the complication of villanies and deceits by which we have become priſoners; but the annals of guilt can produce nothing equal to the duplicity and baſeneſs

baſeneſs of our youngeſt enemy. I can now conjecture why we have been brought to this place.—Convinced of our legitimacy, and juſt title to what he has unlawfully poſſeſſed himſelf of, he would firſt alarm us by his power, and afterwards bring us to compromiſe, in ſuch a manner as ſhall eſtabliſh him in the place where ambition leads him to ſit. But let me be called the baſtard of Alwynd, a villain, by every one, if I be made either to give up any part of, or bargain for, my birth-right. In the morning, however, we ſhall learn more of him and his intentions."

"In the morning!" cried Agatha, doubtingly.—"God, I implore thee to ſhield and protect us!—Ah, William! I fear your thoughts do not half meet his motives."

They

They watched the lamp till the flame faded, Agatha then threw herſelf on the bed, and William endeavoured to find ſome repoſe while ſitting in his chair. Both of them obtained a ſhort ſleep; and ſoon after they awoke they prepared themſelves for a ſecond interview with Celwold, whom they met about the hour of ten.

It was evident that he wiſhed not to look like an enemy, for he received them with a ſmile, and invited them to the repaſt that ſtood before him.

"This is no time," ſaid William, "for the indulging of our appetites. To buſineſs, to buſineſs, my Lord—ſurrounded by myſteries I am impatient to be extricated, and ſhall not reſt till I hear an explanation of the conduct which has ſo much amazed me."

"You

"You are, indeed, moſt haſty," ſaid Celwold.

"I cannot believe but that the ſpirit of my father is troubled at an hour like this. I am glad to meet you alone, as it will remove all conſtraint from our diſcourſe. And now, as you hope God to be merciful to you, I charge you to tell me why you have brought us hither, what your purpoſes are, and how you mean to diſpoſe of us. But firſt I would have you inform me, who you really think me to be, and what the world may call me."

"I know you to be the ſon of Alwynd; but the world ſhall call you ſo only on my conditions. Nay, be calm, ſir,—look on my ſword, and remember that you are unarmed. I always eſteemed myſelf the heir of your father, for he has often declared that you and

your ſiſter were only the children of a deceaſed friend; and of his being ever married, I had neither belief nor ſuſpicion. Do you know what it is to nurſe the hopes of years, and at length to have them ſnatched away by the hand of diſappointment?—When Alwynd died, I thought it would be only a lawful act to take his name and fortunes;—but, lo! ſome papers are diſcovered, which entitle me only to a paltry benefit,—ſet you, whom I had conſidered as a poor penſioner, in grandeur above my head,—and make the man of acknowledged truth a moſt deſpicable liar!"

"Do you not ſtand in fear of hell?" cried William.—"Oh, deteſtable hypocrite! abominable ſlanderer!"

"Look at my face," ſaid Celwold, "and you will ſtill find it ſmooth and calm. Spend not your breath, therefore, in

in loud words, but liſten to what I would further ſay. You call me a hypocrite, ſuch your father was to me, during his whole life; and your other accuſation will not reſt, unleſs you allow that there is ſlander in truth. But, to proceed, my manner of loſing Alwynd's will ſeemed to me moſt ſtrange; and the means by which it was given to you ſtill more extraordinary:—But of the arts which were practiced I could not long be ignorant, and, were I not merciful, I could puniſh you for ſorcery. Previous to that, or rather to the time at which you abſented yourſelf from the caſtle, I was well diſpoſed towards you; and, tho' I had determined never to reveal to you either the narrative or will of your father, yet I ſhould have reſigned to you a part of——"

"Inſult me no longer with language like this," cried William, "you cannot

make your cauſe any better than that of a robber, who ſhould have taken from me a hundred pieces of gold, and afterwards reluctantly reſtored one of them. Beggary be my portion if I ever liſten to ſuch conditions;—I am the heir of Alwynd, and the ſon of Matilda—let that ſuffice."

"In the former character what would you do againſt my oppoſition, even ſhould I ſet open the gates and ſay to you, 'Take your leiſure and beſt opportunities to eſtabliſh your fortunes?' Who would believe your written evidences?—'They are illegal,' it would be generally ſaid of them;—they are baſe contrivances, and let thoſe who impudently ſpeak of their validity, be ſuſpended by their necks till they die in agony. I would be cruel only in extremity; but ſhould you dare to aim at what I have in my poſſeſſion, I will produce men who ſhall ſwear that they were witneſſes to, and might,

might, had they closed with your terms of bribery, have been assistants in your forgeries."

Agatha hung down her head at this acknowledged capability of wickedness, and her brother shook with passion.

"And then, your vaunted royalty!" continued Celwold, "tell me, what would it avail?—While princes are popular and generally smiled upon, nature must have formed them strangely if they are not happy; but on the ebbing of the tide of applause and favour, they sink still lower than any of their subjects in misfortune. The common man has only to stand against an individual assailant, at most a class of foes; the prince, however, bereft of his authority, suspects every thing he sees,—every thing he hears. His enemies, like bees in summer, swarm thickly around him, and, if they light on him,

not one of them will with-hold the ſting that contributes to his death. Declare yourſelf to be the ſon of Matildă,—ſome there are who will ſtare on you, and paſs without moving their caps; and others will ridicule a prince who is too poor to feed and clothe a ſingle lacquey. You will be hooted at as a madman,—deſpiſed as a baſtard,—and ſhould the king get you within his power, he would either cauſe a dagger to be privately ſtuck in your heart, or the remainder of your days to be waſted in a dungeon. I know him well,—his rage would even induce him to have the corrupting body of your father torn from the grave, and expoſed on high with all its deformities."

"Oh, horrid!" cried Agatha, "this is too horrid!"

"Turn, then, your eyes from the picture I have drawn, and place them, with your

your brother's, on that which I ſhall next preſent. Were my intentions tyrannical, my conduct would have been different to what it has been.—In ſeparating you from the hot-brained Mercia, and from the officious Bartonmere, I wiſhed to be as ungentle as poſſible; and it was to keep myſelf from their ſuſpicions that I did not ſooner come to you. Since you have reſided here, I truſt that confinement is the only thing of which you can complain. If any of my fellows have been either inſolent or remiſs, point them out to me, and you ſhall witneſs their puniſhment."

"He muſt have deeply offended me, whom I ſhould put to *your* correction," ſaid William, "but proceed, you promiſed us ſomething more than this."

"Yet I have promiſed nothing equal to what I am willing to give. William, on

one condition you ſhall take the name of your father, and I will relinquiſh the larger part of his poſſeſſions;—thoſe who have followed me as their Lord ſhall turn to you, friendſhip ſhall again unite us, and eternal amity keep from us the remembrance of all paſt bickerings and diſſentions. For theſe actions, however, I ſhall expect a dear and precious reward."

"Name it, name it, if I grant it not."

"The hand, the heart, the perſon of your lovely and adored ſiſter!—of Agatha!—of the woman who is firſt in my love, and whom I now preſs in my deſiring arms!"

"Away! away!" cried Agatha, ſhrinking from the embrace.

"Stand

"Stand off!" exclaimed her brother, "Celwold deſiſt, or you will make me do ſomething that is deſperate."

"What, ſcorned by both of you!" cried Celwold, "unwilling to believe it I will not remain only half aſſured. I have before this time declared my love to Agatha, and I now repeat it, in the preſence of her brother. I muſt ever deſpiſe the unworthy object of her romantic paſſion, whoſe abominable mother drew me into an engagement when my heart was the ſole property of Alwynd's daughter. Agatha, I charge you to be not raſh and inconſiderate.—Once more I offer myſelf to you as a huſband;—will you diſcard the fretful Mercia, and accept of me?"

"Never!—I declare, before God, I never will!"

"William," ſaid Celwold, "entreat your ſiſter to recal the vow ſhe has made; for tho' I am moſt ſincere in my preſent profeſſions, diſappointment may ſoon cauſe me to be wild and tyrannous."

"If you are jeſting with us," replied William, "it is with much gravity; but if you ſpeak ſeriouſly, I would have my ſmiles, not my tongue, give you an anſwer. You marry my ſiſter!—You ſupplant the noble Mercia!—Sooner than take benefit from means like theſe, I would ſell myſelf to irredeemable ſlavery. This is extravagant beyond my conception, and I bluſh to hear what folly unbluſhingly ſpoke. If Agatha does not become the wife of Mercia—of the friend of my heart, let her die in maiden ſingleneſs; and rather than conſent to her union with you, whoſe age, manners, and habits differ as much from her's as autumn does from ſpring, and as duplicity

city and vice do from ſincerity and virtue,—I would for ever bear the chain of captivity, and grovel till death in the vileſt cell you could ſcoop out for me."

"Baſe and inſolent ſtripling!" exclaimed Celwold, "your boaſted reſolution ſhall ſoon be tried, and I will ſpeedily humble the arrogance of your ſiſter. Love converted to hatred is fierce and deadly in its operations;—beware of the change to which I allude, and curſe only yourſelf when you ſhall feel the painful effects of it. To this houſe your deceptious father brought you in your infancy; and here you both ſhall periſh, before I will be either defeated in my purpoſes or degraded by your contumacy."

He then retired haſtily, and his captives immediately went to their apartment filled with aſtoniſhment and agony.

"Enable

"Enable me, good Heaven!" cried Agatha, "to bear the inſolence and oppreſſions of him whoſe crimes make him moſt deteſtable. Here our father ſmiled while the tender Neville reared his motherleſs infants;—here, perhaps, we are both fated to the blow of an hired aſſaſſin!—My blood curdles.—Where, oh, where are you, my beloved Mercia? William, let me lean upon your arm,—my forehead beats and my imagination grows wild."

"Sink not, Agatha, for we can hope no longer than we are reſolute.—But tell me what the villain meant, when he ſaid that he had before declared his love to you?"

"He took an opportunity, in the abſence of you and Mercia, to ſpeak of it, and addreſſed me in ſuch terms, that I was diſcompoſed till you came back to

to me, when I again thought myſelf ſecure. He renewed the ſubject only once, and that was ſoon after the arrival of the partner of his licentiouſneſs. With the knowledge I had of your temper, as well as of Mercia's, I thought it would be imprudent to reveal the cauſe of my uneaſineſs; and Celwold's ſubſequent conduct was ſuch as led me to believe, that I had become indifferent to him, and that Lady Mercia was entitled to the love which I had rejected. But now I find I was deceived—now, perhaps, the life of my brother will be ſavagely taken from him, and no perſon will give me aid, while I ſhriek and implore to be reſcued from violence."

"Let the moſt dreadful puniſhment of God, come quicker than lightning to him, who ſhall dare to injure you. Fear it not, my ſiſter. Celwold will never proceed to ſuch extremities; and though

though I have no preſent hope of freedom, I truſt the time will arrive, when I ſhall go into it, with a heart unoppreſſed by a ſingle care. I have now ſome knowledge of the place in which we are impriſoned, and it may be of advantage to me. Oh, that I could either ſpeak or write a few words to Mary—that I could appriſe Bartonmere and Mercia of our ſituation and danger!".

During three enſuing days they ſaw not him by whom they were held in bondage; but on the morning of the fourth he came to them, and repeated his offers, which were again peremptorily rejected. While he was renewing his wiſhes and intentions, he was calm, collected, and conciliatory; when they, however, again aſſured him that his terms were held to be deſpicable, and would never be acceded to, his eye blazed and his cheſt roſe with paſſion.

He

He vowed that his vengeance ſhould fall on both of them, and that it ſhould not be long ſuſpended. He curſed their arrogance, for turning from an alliance that would have honoured them; and bade them feed no expectation of ever departing from a place, in which they had ſhewn ſuch an inſolence of ſpirit. After ſome further and ſevere menaces he retired. His ferocity terrified Agatha, and alarmed her brother; they more ſeriouſly dreaded his power and malignity, and while they were earneſtly diſcourſing on the ſubject, ſix of Celwold's men entered the room, and tore them from the arms of each other.

Seeing that four of the wretches were bearing her brother away, Agatha made an effort to throw herſelf upon his neck, but ſhe did not ſucceed, and falling with violence on the floor, William perceived that the boards were ſtained with her

her blood, and heard her ſhriek for her brother, her beloved brother! — His attempt to free himſelf was ineffectual,— his aſſailants were too many for him,— and they hurried him away, without allowing him to raiſe up or ſpeak to his wretched ſiſter.

The ſenſes of Agatha wandered for a conſiderable time, and on their return, ſhe found Celwold ſtanding over her. He endeavoured to conſole her, raiſed her on his breaſt, and ſpoke ſoothingly to her, when he thought her capable of underſtanding him. With a full recollection of her condition, ſhe freed herſelf from his embrace; and, with indignation beat down the hand that was held out to her. She ſeized him by the arm, and looking with a wild expreſſion in his face, called and even frantically raved for her brother.

"I

"I know what you mean," ſhe cried, "by tearing him from me. It is his blood you crave; your black ſoul is impatient for it, and yourſelf and your murderers are equally ready. But you ſhall not—dare not touch him. Some counteracting ſpirit will come upon you, and ere you can perform the guilty deed, your throat will ſwell and blacken in its graſp. Oh, Celwold! By the true and only God, I implore you to offer no violence to my brother! Send him to me, replace him in my arms, and all my curſes will be changed to bleſſings."

"You know my terms, Agatha—will you accept them?"

"No! Did twenty lives, with my own among them, depend on my acquieſcence, I would ever anſwer thus. No, Celwold! the ſtate of death, however little it may be known or underſtood,

I would go into, rather than the miſerable certainty you have propoſed."

"Then your brother ſhall die, unfeeling girl!"

"Virtue never dies; it ſleeps for a while, to wake more joyfully than it went to its repoſe. But when you ſhall have paſſed through exiſtence, horrible will be the baniſhment of your dreams. Heaven will be in your eyes, and hell beneath your ſinking feet. My brother! Give me—unnatural murderer, give me my brother!"

She was running in ſearch of William, when Celwold ſeized her in his arms, and bore her to her chamber. He deſired that the woman might come to him immediately; and as ſoon as ſhe appeared, he put Agatha under her care,

care, and desired her to be watchful over her charge.

Though Celwold had as yet gained but little, he believed that perseverance would bring him much; and though he actually meant not to carry his resentments so far as he had threatened, still he was determined to push them forward, till he attained some of his wishes. Opposed as he was, he did not despair, but that he should yet humble the spirit of Alwynd's son, and succeed in making Agatha such as he wished her to be.

His love was of a strong, but peculiar nature. The time had not long passed since he despised her and her brother alike. But it was in witnessing her sweet gratitude, after the death of her father, and in comparing her modest loveliness with the bold features of the abandoned Lady Mercia, that he took in sentiments,

ſentiments, which had been baniſhed during a ſeries of years, or rather, which he then came to an original knowledge of.

Hating Mercia as he did, it was glorious to think, that ſhe might probably be wreſted from him; and though he knew that great ſacrifices muſt previouſly be made to her brother, yet even avarice ſeemed inclined to offer them quietly. What he might gain by the alliance he had ambitiouſly calculated. He believed that he poſſeſſed policy enough to work himſelf into greatneſs; and though his words and actions appeared to his priſoners groſs inconſiſtencies, he knew how their unities might be diſcovered, as well as the manner in which they would co-operate.

He had always entertained a private vanity in regard to his perſon, and, in ſpite

ſpite of the recent remarks of William, he thought it might ſtill ſtand the teſt with that of his youthful rival. Previouſly aſſured that he ſhould have many obſtacles to oppoſe, he had not expected from Agatha an immediate acquieſcence. There was, however, in her, as well as in her brother, more determination and ſpirit than he could have wiſhed to find, ſtill he believed that they would bend to his purpoſes; and though Agatha had made a moſt ſtrong and ſerious vow, yet he had both heard and read of the ſame being done by many women, whoſe perjuries were forgotten by themſelves, and unnoticed by the world.

Having placed William in a ſeparate and diſtant room, he ſuffered ſeveral days to elapſe before he renewed his ſuit. But he made frequent enquiries after Agatha, and deſired his fellows to wait on her with attention and reſpect. His principal

principal agent and ambaſſador was a man who had not been long in his ſervice, but whoſe daring ſpirit and deep duplicity ſeemed well adapted to his employer's purpoſes.

This fellow's name was Euſtace. He had been in the continental wars, the proofs of which were on his forehead and cheek, though vanity cauſed him to hide the marks, which valor would have prompted many men to diſplay.

Villany cannot act upon inequalities. A certain degree of familiarity ſubſiſted between Celwold and Euſtace; and whatever the one thought or deſigned, he without reſerve communicated to the other. Euſtace was in the habit of viſiting both William and Agatha. He ſometimes looked on them with a deadly hatred, as if he had received from them a thouſand wrongs; and ſometimes that part

part of his face which was visible would not be without tenderness and compassion.

William noticed his apparent qualities, but as his visits were limited to a few minutes he could not try them. Still it was somewhat extraordinary to him, that an uninjured man could look so revengefully; and equally strange that one hired for base actions, and the exercise of oppression, should occasionally call into his face the seeming natural looks of mildness and sympathy.

Agatha found nothing inexplicable in Eustace; she scarcely ever looked up to him, and was always anxious for him to depart. He would not speak of her brother—and of no other person or thing she wished to converse. He refused to tell her where he was, or whether he was well, for which she deemed him a savage, and inwardly execrated him. The horrors

horrors of her ſituation were growing more black and inſupportable; and when Celwold viſited her again, he found her ſo greatly changed, that for a moment he was ſeiſed by ſhame and remorſe. But diſcovering that ſhe was ſtill inflexible, ſevere in her reproaches, and ſtrong in the epithets ſhe placed on him, he again grew into hardineſs, and ſwore to carry his reſentments as far as they would extend, if ſhe did not alter her conduct, and comply with his wiſhes.

She ſtarted at his menaces, and her eyes turned towards him with terror.

"Why, why," he cried, "will you force me to ſeverity?—However harſh my actions may ſeem, I proteſt that I love you ſtill. Reproachful, obſtinate, and inſulting as you have been, my paſſion yet ſurvives, and my heart remains your property. If you conſent to my deſires,

deſires, I will lead you forth in ſplendour to my admiring people, and ſay to them, 'Obſerve and reverence my wife.' He who ſerves you with moſt diligence ſhall be beſt rewarded. But if any one of them diſobey your commands, he ſhall ſoon meet with diſgrace and infamy. Oh, Agatha! your ſmiles and love——"

"Name them not, but think of Mercia."

"Forgetfulneſs to the name, and ruin to him who bears it!—Know, tormenting girl, that every minute of your delay adds to the pangs and diſtreſſes of your brother. You have driven me into the paths which I now tread—I was compelled to enter them for the want of a middle way. You have no affection for your brother—you would have his life waſte in ſorrow and captivity—you never wiſh to ſee him again."

"Oh, falſehood, falſehood!—Reſtore him to liberty, and do what you pleaſe with me. Once more I will appeal to you—again implore and ſupplicate.—Let me ſee and ſpeak to my brother. If, but for a moment, you will ſuffer me to look on him—if you will only allow me to ſay, 'God bleſs you, William!' you ſhall find that I will——"

"What?—tell me what, my lovely Agatha!"

"Urge me no further now, for I hear the voice of nature calling aloud to me. Lead on, lead on. I conjure you, by heaven and its ſaints, not to blaſt the hopes of my anxious and throbbing heart!"

"Follow me, then," cried Celwold, "be timely wiſe, and do not dally with happineſs

happineſs till the arms of miſery are rivetted around you."

He led her down the ſtairs, and they ſoon came to the baſement floor. Taking her arm, he then directed her through ſeveral paſſages, deſcended with her another flight of ſteps, and at length entered a large dull and vapoury place, around which Agatha caſt her expecting but affrighted eyes. It ſeemed to her a ſpot of horror, and ſhe ſtood ſhivering with dread. She looked upon the face of Celwold, fancied that the features of a murderer were turned towards her, and wildly aſked whether that was the deteſtable priſon of her brother.

Celwold touched a bell, and within a few minutes a wide dark curtain was drawn up, which diſcovered Euſtace ſtanding behind an iron ſcreen, at the extremity of the room.

"Bring forth your priſoner," ſaid Celwold, "and tell him to be tranquil."

"Tranquil he muſt be," replied Euſtace, "for he ſcarcely lives."

Euſtace withdrew, — Agatha's head was growing wild, ſhe gazed on the grate and ſoon beheld the captive and heard his chains. She was flying towards him but Celwold detained her in his arms;— ſhe vainly ſtruggled to free herſelf, ſtretched forth her hands to her brother, and called on him with a voice broken by agony.

William, viewed at a diſtance, appeared thin, weak, and ſallow; and he reſted his head on the bars, beyond which he wiſhed to fly to meet the denied embrace.

"And are ſuch things as theſe," cried Agatha, "ſuffered in the world? — Is there

there no fear of God, and does not his immediate vengeance fall on the perpetrator of a crime like this?—Oh! baſe and wicked Celwold! what anſwer will you make to the account that ſhall be hereafter ſtated? William! Brother! ſpeak to me;—let me hear your voice, for I begin to ſuſpect that they have only ſet before my eyes your murdered body."

"Oh, my ſiſter!——"

"Are theſe the tones of a man?—Miſery!—Why did I come hither?—This object will be ever in my eyes, when death has half cloſed them it will not be excluded!—Attempt not to hold me, barbarian! I muſt, I will go to my brother,—he appears to be dying;—let me only have the charge of him till his breath is gone."

"If the laſt agonies were in him," cried Celwold, "you ſhould not move a ſtep. My buſineſs at preſent is to revenge the injuries I have received from you and him, not to wink at further conſpiracy."

"You can fear nothing from feebleneſs like ours;—You can watch and limit our actions. Almighty God! he cannot ſpeak to me!—He falls for want of aid,—he periſhes, unaſſiſted, in the ſight of his ſiſter!"

"He is only weak and fainting," ſaid Celwold, "and with a little care health might be brought back to him. If you accept my terms, the roſes of ſummer ſhall not be more red than his face when he ſpurns the fetters of captivity; but if you reject them, this night, this very night——."

"This

"This night.—What?—What of this night?"

"His heart ſhall ceaſe to beat for ever."

"Murder! — Your terms. — What are they?"

"That you will now renounce the vow you made.—That you will immediately become my wife."

"And my brother ſhall be free? And you will give him to my arms?"

"I will take off his irons myſelf.—I will place him on your boſom, and watch by your ſide for his recovery."

"Do it then, do it inſtantly, and let me ſatisfy humanity. My brother, I ſhall claſp you yet! We ſhall ſtill

ſpeak comfort to, and ſmile on each other. Celwold, here is my hand; take it, and make me what you pleaſe. Off with the chains of your victim, and lead him forth to me.—Let me kiſs his cheek;—let me lay his weakened body on ſome eaſy reſting place;—then do you call the prieſt and ſay to him, 'Make me the huſband of this woman.' If I go wild before the morning, take no unfair advantages of my condition, but regard my brother. Open the grate, and ſend the prieſt to the altar."

Ruſhing up to the barrier, ſhe madly ſtrove to tear it down, and caught the cold—extended hand of William.

"Are you ſenſible?" ſhe cried, "have you heard the accepted conditions of Celwold?"

"Yes,

"Yes, I have heard them," he replied, with all poſſible exertion, "but now you muſt ſwear never to become his wife. Never, whatever may be our fate, to bind yourſelf to one, whom it is pollution to touch, and diſgrace to aſſociate with."

"But, did you hear him? To night! —Look at him and tremble."

"Let him be as diabolical in his actions as he has threatened; that he will be ſo I can well believe, but even the certainty of it, ſhould not draw from me an aſſent to his propoſal. We may never meet again— God bleſs you, Agatha!—He will protect you, ſiſter; if virtue was ever his care. Mary and I are ſeparated eternally! Think of Mercia; and do not, even for the preſervation of life, run into perjury."

"For my own ſake I would not—But for you—A death of torture, depending on means I know not how horrid; effected by devils I know not how ingeniouſly ſanguinary! It muſt not be! You ſhall ſtill be ſaved. Celwold, Celwold! Take me hence inſtantly."

The perſon ſhe called on approached, and was leading her away, when William, growing almoſt frantic, ſhook the bars of his priſon, and ſummoned her back to him. She tore her hand from Celwold, and returned to the captive.

"I could wiſh to bleſs you in death, Agatha," he cried, "do not, therefore, urge me to curſe you. By the reputation of our father, by the virtue of our mother, and by the purity of your paſt days, I conjure you

you to diſhonour neither yourſelf nor your brother. I was ever aſſured of your love; I now read it in your wild countenance. But I moſt ſolemnly de-declare, that if you conſent to be united to the villain who ſtands before me, I will diſdain to accept his mercy, and tear out my heart, if I have no other inſtruments than my nails."

"My noble brother! I have caught your ſpirit, and will nouriſh it in my breaſt. Now, Celwold, hear a repetition of my vow. By every thing that is holy in Heaven, and good on earth, I ſwear I never will be your wife!"

"Then inſtant vengeance ſhall be mine. Euſtace, away with the priſoner, and diſpoſe of him as you have been commanded."

The

ſenſeleſs. Leave us together, Euſtace. This moment may decide my fate—now I may perform an action that will hereafter cauſe her to accept the hand that ſhe has ſo ſtrongly rejected."

"Why ſhould I leave you, my Lord? What do you mean?—Violence, rape?"

"Love, love, my faithful fellow!—Begone—ſtay not with me another minute. The project is formed, and eternal joy will follow the execution of it."

"Eternal torture ſeize, and everlaſting damnation bind up your ſinews, if you ſhall ever dare to do the deed on which you have impiously meditated!"

"How now?—Preſumptuous wretch!—Beware that you anſwer me not, and begone immediately."

"If

"If I do may I be ſnatched into perdition by one of thoſe fiends whoſe commiſſions are ſigned in hell!—Leave you?—What, give you an opportunity to be both filthy and wicked?—Leave you to oppoſe a ſtrong and brutal will againſt a defenceleſs, inſenſible woman? God!—How ſhe looks at you!—If ſuch a face as that ſhould be near your death-bed, you need not fear the diſcovery of any thereafter thing more calmly terrible. Is this an object for paſſion to feed on?—I dare not look at her any longer."

"Well, well, retire. I have been to blame, and you too rude. Retire."

"You ſhall precede me—here I fix myſelf—here will remain till you depart. In Normandy I once cleft the ſkull of a young Count for rioting in the charms of a reſiſting but too forceleſs villager. I have brought my ſpirit into Britain, but

but ſhould be loath to exerciſe it, without juſt cauſe and previous aggravation. Nay, look not ſo diſdainfully, for I aſſert no more than I have done, and am capable of doing. Perhaps you think that I have too much conſcience for your employment, ſtill you dare not diſcard me. I am not in your power, but you are completely in mine. I know the damned treacheries of my ſpecies, I therefore am ever ready for my defence; beſide this I prepare my own food, and ſelect the hours moſt ſecure for ſleeping. I would be more deceptive than ſanguinary in my operations; and though I am ſtern to the captives, I will never be wholly barbarous. Let the girl recover her ſenſes; and ſuffer not the malady of her brother to be neglected. If they continue to oppoſe your inclinations, do you continue to imprifon them. But you ſhall go no further while I am here. Murder ſhall never reach William——'

"You

"You know, Euſtace, that I never wiſhed it. My ſole intent was to alarm and terrify till I found compliance."

"But here you were proceeding further—here you were heating with a deſign a thouſand times more cruel than either the open maſſacre, or the private murder of a thouſand men. This object will ſpeak more forcibly than my tongue."

He pointed to Agatha, who had not uttered a word ſince her entrance; but Celwold turned away his head, and almoſt immediately left the room. Euſtace now endeavoured to rouſe the girl from her lethargy. He addreſſed her with tenderneſs, and repeatedly ſhook her arm; her features however moved not, and finding his efforts unavailing, he locked the door of her chamber, and went to the other priſoner.

"Your

"Your condition touches me," he ſaid to William, "by my ſoul, I am ſincere, when I ſay that I pity you. It was not always thus, my actions will ſpeak to the contrary. Son of Alwynd, deſpair not, for all may be well hereafter. Here is wine, drink it and revive. I cannot give you freedom, but, by my God, I will protect both you and your ſiſter againſt the machinations of Celwold, whom I have never eſteemed—whom I now deſpiſe, abhor, execrate. Should he come to you alone, be upon your guard; if he ſeek your blood, let this inſtrument, which I charge you to hide, find the depth of his deceitful breaſt."

"Bleſſings, bleſſings on you, Euſtace!"

"Hold! I deſerve them not. They cannot make me what it was once my pride to be."

"But

"But will you, indeed, protect my ſiſter?—For myſelf I care not; but, righteous heaven! for her——"

"I know what you would ſay. I will protect her—and you may depend on this aſſurance as ſtrongly as if it were made within the walls of a church, and witneſſed by a hundred regiſtering prieſts. Oh, how noble would be an univerſal confidence!—But that is a chimera, for we are all, in a great or ſmall degree, corrupt, ſinful, and lying. Our fathers will cheat, and our very brothers act fraudulently with us. Down therefore muſt fall my fabric, the deſign of which is beautiful, though its materials are unſound and periſhable. William be firm, and careful of your health. The events of this day have terrified your ſiſter; and though I have been a petty tyrant, I now fly to ſolace her."

As

As Euſtace returned to Agatha's chamber, he paſſed the guilty Celwold; but he paid him no reſpect, nor in any manner noticed him. He ſhewed, however, a calm determination in his actions, and went by his angry, but cowardly employer, as if there were no inequality in their conditions.

He diſcovered Agatha gazing on a bloody handkerchief, which ſhe told him had been ſtained by her brother's breaſt. Recollecting that he had left it there, (he having torn his hand, in conducting William back to his chamber,) and finding that ſhe was now rouſed from her late ſtupor, he took the cloth from her, and tenderly aſſured her that there was no cauſe for her ſuſpicions.

He could not eaſily make her ſenſible of what he ſaid; and he ſuppoſed murder

murder had ſo ſtrongly impreſſed her mind, that it was long before ſhe would believe in his exiſtence. Euſtace ſtopped not after affirming that William was living. Compaſſion ſpread over his olive face, and he told Agatha, that if ſhe would be calm and compoſed in her actions during the day, and admit him quietly at midnight, he would conduct her to her brother, and put her into his unſhackled arms. She grew almoſt mad with joy, ſhe promiſed to be ſoon tranquil and collected, and embraced his knees in her ecſtacy.

Euſtace did not diſappoint her. At the time he had mentioned he came to her with a darkened lanthorn, and after exploring with her ſeveral rooms and paſſages, again ſhe breathed on the joyfully tumultuous breaſt of her brother. They were left nearly an hour together. — Agatha now found that William was weakened

ened by affliction, rather than tyranny; for he had been attacked by a fever, that raged for ſeveral days with an almoſt deſtructive violence.

Their converſation at this meeting was both tender and impaſſioned; ſweetly affectionate, and deeply melancholy. They were ſpeaking of the ſtrange character of Euſtace, when he entered, and told them that they muſt ſeparate.

"I am loath to part you," he ſaid, "but prudence directs me ſo to do. Celwold may yet be waking; and his fellows will watch for gain. Come—come, lady, let us begone."

"Oh, Euſtace!" cried Agatha, "I expected not to find ſo much humanity in any perſon here. Be further merciful, and convey us privately from this place of ſin and danger."

"By

"By Heaven I have no means. The gates are closed on me as well as you. But I have sworn to protect you, and may the most dreadful vengeance follow my perjury. If I cannot give you to liberty, I will save you from violence."

"Eustace!" exclaimed William, "let me strain you to my breast. I am assured, that in some causes, you could be nobly great. I once marked you as a desperate assassin, but now find the strength of your humanity. If I ever regain my liberty you shall stand in my favour; and your fortunes shall not be indifferent to me."

"Hold, hold, hold!" cried Eustace quickly, but his voice changed, and in a sullen tone he continued, "talk not to me of benefits and rewards;—of favour and fortune. None of them have of late belonged to me;—none of them

I ſhall claim hereafter. Man generally walks the paths of life as an idle ſpectator. The objects he meets with amuſe only as they vary; and the ways, while they are ſmooth, ſeem alike indifferent. His choice of them waſtes not much of his time;—he enters without conſideration, goes forward without reflection, and when he comes to the termination, with one ſingle glance he can view the vaſt tract over which he has gone. The termination!—Well it has been ſpoken. Sir, I am no ſuch traveller as I have deſcribed. I have ſet up a ſanguine mark in a deſolate vale, which is viſible to no other perſon than myſelf. I have ſaid ſo far, and not a ſtep further will I go; and an hundred times in every day, I ſtand and gaze on the beacon, till my giddy brain makes me fancy that it moves towards me to mock my tardineſs."

"What

"What do you mean?" enquired William.

"Oh, nothing, nothing. My melancholy will paſs away without the aid of the lancet. Come, Agatha, you muſt depart inſtantly."

"But tell me, good Euſtace! tell me whether I ſhall ſee my brother again?"

"I will ſhew myſelf your friend whenever I have the power. Let us begone."

"Adieu, my brother! God guard and reſtore you to health."

"Farewel! dear ſiſter, farewel! Euſtace, you have a moſt precious truſt——"

"And never will I abuſe it. To your couch, young man, to your couch, or your eyes will be open at day break."

He then led Agatha back to her chamber. She ſlept ſoundly. Relying on the protection of her newly diſcovered friend, ſhe received Celwold on the enſuing day, and heard his renewed menaces with reſolution; and on the following night ſhe was allowed the happineſs of ſeeing her brother again.

The conduct of Euſtace was ſo evidently changed, that his employer began to ſuſpect him. The fellow nicely watched his geſtures, he alſo diſcovered ſome of his thoughts, but neither ſhrunk from ſcrutiny, nor dreaded diſpleaſure. Though he could uſe on no occaſion only one eye, that ſeemed to have been borrowed of the lynx; his heart had been large enough

enough for the cheſt of a lion; and warineſs and a daring ſpirit were his characteriſtics. He perceived that Celwold repented of having made him one of his inſtruments. He ſaw that many doubts and fears crouded into the coward's breaſt, and believed that his ſecret removal by murder had been planned.

"Do you ſuppoſe," he ſaid to Celwold, "that, becauſe one of my balls of ſight has been raked out of its ſocket, the remaining one is ſo drowſy a ſervant as to wink at my danger? You have malice in your heart;—your deſigns towards me are evil. As I lay on my bed laſt night, I heard a noiſe at the door of my chamber.—Rats, rats, it may be ſaid—No, there were vermin of a different ſpecies trying to get in. But I foiled them, ſuffered them to make their paws weary with ſcratching, and then, merely by locking my

jaws and blowing through them, frightened them back to their ſtinking holes, and hiding places."

"And what is this to me?"

"Nothing; deſign and execution are diſtinct things. Were not your pulſes quick at the time I mentioned? And did you not curſe your emiſſaries on their unſucceſsful return? Ha! I was tempted to unbolt the door, and to rip the bowels of the unſhod raſcals. But the night was ſomewhat hot, conſidering the ſeaſon, and I feared their carcaſes would taint my chamber, and fill it with buzzing flies to the interruption of my after ſlumbers."

"How dare you talk with ſo much inſolence to me?"

"Pray

"Pray enquire not into my prerogative. This ſun-burnt ethiopian face of mine, has been ſhewn in many parts of the world; and I have ſeen thoſe who were deſirous to queſtion me, draw back in ſilence. What did you think of me when I ſtood near the road-ſide, and aſked employment of you with my eye, my heart being too proud for the office? Yet anſwer me not.—I would not demand of others what I refuſe to them myſelf. This only I ſay, I will not be ſuſpected even by you; and ſhould any attempt be ever made on my life, I will provide food for your kennel, as well as for the crows that hover over it."

"I know not," ſaid Celwold, "of any deſigned injury; and if you have enemies, I did not cauſe them to become ſuch. You muſt remember the

terms of our agreement, from which you ought not to run."

"Perhaps there is not a man living who has not entered into ſome covenant which he wiſhes to break. We are the tools of weakneſs and creatures of precipitance;—but I recollect not that I have performed leſs than I promiſed. I hated the captives at firſt as ſtrongly as you did; my reſentments, however, have ſubſided, and I can no longer be cruel and tyrannic."

"You would encourage arrogance and obſtinacy;—you would aid no project by which my happineſs might be ſecured."

"A tranſient gratification may be had, but happineſs can never be obtained by means ſuch as you would employ.—The guilty pleaſures of life will ever encreaſe the horrors of death,—this will be confeſſed by vice, by immorality, and even by

by atheiſm. My lord, if you truſt me ſtill, ſtill will I ſerve you;—but Alwynd's ſon muſt have only his fetters to complain of, and his daughter's chaſtity ſhall be defiled neither by force nor artifice."

He then left Celwold, who had, during this diſcourſe, ſent a thouſand ſecret curſes to him. Euſtace, when firſt known to him had acted like a man of ordinary intellects, and ſeemed a perſon well adapted for the employment in which he was deſigned to be placed;—but he had now aſſumed a character greatly different, diſplayed a mind both ſtrong and in no common degree cultivated, proudly ſhewn a power ſuperior to that before which it had been expected he would humble, and, from a ſervile dependent grown into conſequence and authority.

Celwold never poſſeſſed much valour, and tho' he execrated Euſtace he would not venture to chaſtiſe him. He found a moſt determined oppoſer in an expected aſſiſtant, and believed that nothing could be done to his ſatisfaction while this ſtrange fellow was living and near to him. To remove him, therefore, effectually, he determined ſhould be his principal aim, and he wiſhed for the arrival of ſome moment when his cup might be poiſoned or a dagger thruſt into his heart.

While the captives were bewailing their fate, and meeting the inſults of Celwold, which were tempered only by the private indulgencies of Euſtace, their friends at Bartonmere were ſinking into grief and deſpondency; the burſting ſpring brought to them no pleaſures, and external beauty charmed not thoſe to whom the ſcenes of

of nature had ever been dear;—the flowery foreſt and the dull ocean, the ſandy unfruitful tract and the fields of verdure were objects of no ſeeming difference.

Time encreaſed rather than leſſened their ſorrows.—Had they had any aſſurances of the death of thoſe whoſe loſs they lamented, the inevitable event would have been juſtly conſidered, and a period arrived when their exceſſive grief would have faded into regret; but it was uncertainty that moſt tortured them, they were aſſailed by the pangs of apprehenſion and could call in no hopes to oppoſe their fears. Of all the miſeries pertaining to human life, none are worſe than thoſe iſſuing from a ſick and deſpairing heart; while there is activity in our afflictions we do not think them wholly deſperate, but when they are ſtilled and ſullen, to brood over our remedileſs evils is only nurſing death upon our breaſts.

Lord

Lord Bartonmere was a ſincere mourner in himſelf, but he ſuffered ſeverely indeed whenever he turned his eyes upon Mary and her brother, who ſeemed to be wearied by ſtruggling againſt their miſfortunes. Half of the anguiſh that the former experienced ſhe did not ſpeak of; all her care was directed towards Mercia, from whom ſhe feared ſhe ſhould ſoon be compelled to ſeparate eternally.—To die for love will be ridiculed only by thoſe who have little knowledge of the operations of the paſſions;—grief and exceſſive joy have had their many victims, and love becomes either grief or joy according to its diſappointments or ſucceſſes,—the inſtinct is to be regarded,—the diſtinguiſhment is ſimply a ſound.

Mary viewed Mercia as the poor remnant of her happineſs, to preſerve which ſhe was moſt tender and ſtudious. She thought there were not many men, ſituated

ated as he was, who would have acted ſo nobly and free of prejudice; for he had warmly taken her to his boſom, where he moſt kindly cheriſhed her as a ſiſter, though his mother was held to be execrable. He had diſunited objects with peculiar tenderneſs and delicacy; juſtly regarding the one for its perfections, and contemning the other for its impurities.

Gratitude had ever been one of the principal qualities of Mary's diſpoſition, but ſhe knew neither its force nor extent till ſhe became acquainted with the man who had reſcued her from ſhame and oppreſſion.

She now endeavoured to repay ſome of the benefits ſhe had received with all the kindneſs of her nature; and though it was only affliction ſolacing the afflicted, ſtill ſhe kept moſt of her own ſorrows

ſorrows in ſtrict confinement, and rejoiced whenever ſhe ſaw a faint ſmile, or colour, ſpread upon her patient's cheek. It was always her endeavour to raiſe a hope, and then ſkilfully build on it. Her ſimplicity, earneſtneſs of heart, and devout confidence, formed a ſweet philoſophy, which Mercia, though he feared many parts of it to be fallacious, heard with pleaſure, while he held the fair moraliſt in his truly affectionate arms.

But for no long period could he be detained by her to liſten to a tale in which he found more tenderneſs than truth. The words of Lord Bartonmere were alſo unavailing; and Mercia frequently broke from them, in order to ruminate without diſturbance in places lonely and ſequeſtered, towards which neither conſolation ſent her voice, nor curioſity turned an eye.

He

He went not in purſuit of happineſs, and therefore took in no new diſappointments when he found it not. His expectations were dead—the blood of his heart ſeemed to have ſtagnated in grief, and the ſtilled current ſhewed no token of renewing its courſe.

One evening he rambled a conſiderable diſtance, wide of thoſe paths where man was to be found, and through fields where the tall corn bent its head in ſtillneſs. The daily courſe of the ſun was juſt over; his rays had been withdrawn, but the weſtern hemiſphere was hung with rich and glowing clouds, which were ſeen to move in ſlow and majeſtic grandeur. There was melody, as well as beauty and fragrance all around. The ſuſpended lark ſeemed to make her laſt ſong the longeſt and ſofteſt of the day; the ſalacious dragon-fly, in its purſuit of love, twittered its green and burniſhed

niſhed wing; and the cloſing ſweet-briar roſes, and cluſtering wild-ſuckles, ſhed far and near their delicious perfumes.

Whether ſummer warmed, or winter froze, Mercia had no eyes for nature.—Her ſeverities cauſed him not to murmur; and her gales and riches were felt without pleaſure, and viewed without gratitude. He no longer praiſed induſtry, nor encouraged ſport. The village ſtriplings could not regain his ſmiles; and though he with-held not his charity from the aged and unfortunate ruſtics, he gave it haſtily, and ran from their prayers and bleſſings as if he either did not hear or was offended by them.

He could ſcarcely turn his eyes towards any object that reminded him not of the happineſs which was paſt, and of the abſence of thoſe friends whoſe return he never expected. In the courſe of his long

long evening ramble, he had ſtopped at the noiſeleſs cave of Martyn of Fenroſe; he had alſo ſtruck his ſtaff on the ſpot where Alwynd died; and finally he pauſed over the rail of the bridge that lay acroſs the river in which the ſportive Oſwy, none of whoſe artifices were known, untimely periſhed.

All theſe perſons had a ſeeming connection with William and Agatha.—Mercia ſtood gazing on the rippling water, which the moon beams made beautiful; and he thought ſo ſtrongly on the diſappearance of Agatha and her brother, that at length he almoſt fancied he ſaw the ſpirit of the drowned boy riſe from the ſtream, and expreſs anew the diſtraction he had ſhewn when he returned to ſpeak of the violence that had been done to thoſe whom he profeſſed ſo truly to love.

His

myſelf an ingrate, a villain—one who was too baſe to receive benefits, and whoſe life grew worſe for its preſervation."

"If you have deſigned me evil," ſaid Mercia, "I forgive you. Let that ſuffice, and may your conſcience be quieted."

"You have taken a load from my heart," cried the ſtranger, "but you will, I fear, ſhew me leſs lenity hereafter. You muſt liſten to me here—I have ſomething to tell which will ſurpriſe, agoniſe, and, perhaps, enrage you. But you have given me your pardon—remember that; and though I ought to ſuffocate in this ſtream, I beg you will do me no violence. You are unarmed, take my ſword and truſt me."

Mercia felt intereſted. He declined the weapon, and ſitting down on the bank, he deſired the man to proceed.

"At

"At the time when you, my Lord did me the ſervices of which I have ſpoken, I was more unfortunate than criminal, and had been ſo for a conſiderable time, almoſt long enough to make me lay down the life of which I was weary. I ſuffered many calamities.—My caſe was not reported to you, till exceſſive diſtreſs made me a robber. One night I ſtopped Lord Celwold in the foreſt, and took from him all the gold he had about him. The next morning your unexpected bounty reached me, and then my ill-acquired riches were as curſes to me."

"Go on," ſaid Mercia.

"I gave comfort to my afflicted wife, food to my famiſhed babes, and again reared my cottage, in which I intended to live honeſtly. But two months had ſcarcely elapſed, before Lord Celwold found that I was the man who had aſ-

ſaulted

"Pity not, but rather curſe the ſimple imp," cried the ſtranger, "yet why ſhould I, an experienced villain, wiſh you to execrate one whoſe years were ſo few. Suffice it to ſay that Oſwy was compoſed of the worſt qualities. Celwold bribed the lad, and made him great promiſes; in return, he cunningly led the objects of your love and friendſhip into the power of the Baron, whoſe agents conveyed the ſurpriſed captives to the manor-houſe which once belonged to Lord Alwynd, where they now remain in ſorrow and apprehenſion."

"What!" exclaimed Mercia, "in the power of Celwold? Do you ſpeak truly in ſaying ſo?"

"I do, my Lord; by Heaven I ſwear it!—But your Lordſhip is fainting. Throw off your hat, and lean upon my arm."

"It

"It is ſurpriſe that overpowers me. But I have found them! I have found them, and ſhall be happy! I will reſtore them to light and liberty—I will lead them forth with—Oh, this is too great and ſudden for my unprepared heart! Rejoice, rejoice, Mercia, that thou art ſo near to felicity!"

"You are much agitated, my Lord. Let me lead you to the caſtle, and there I will tell you further."

"Be rooted here till I am ſatisfied. Stir not the ſmalleſt ſpace till you have told me more. Oh, villany, villany! I will borrow a dagger of revenge, and its qualities ſhall be tried upon the accurſed body of Celwold. But was my mother buſy in the plot?"

"It was, I have been informed, ſo reported to you. I dare ſwear, however, that

that ſhe had no concern in it; and the artifice of Oſwy, in that reſpect, has often created mirth among the creatures of his employer."

"God pardon me, then, for my recent words and curſes!—But ſay, what are the intentions of Celwold?—How do my injured friends?—And what were all your purpoſes in thus ſeeking me?—Oh, you know not how impatient is my ſoul!—With-hold not your anſwer,—ſpeak inſtantly, or I ſhall go wild with conjecture."

The purpoſes of Celwold were well known to the man, who now declared them to the aſtoniſhed and almoſt diſbelieving Mercia. The lover of Agatha rubbed his brows as if he thought his brain were affected, when he was informed that Celwold hoped to perſecute her till he compelled her to be his wife, and

and that her acquieſcence was daily demanded.

Mercia made the man ſpeak it again, leſt his ear ſhould have been deceived.—His heart alternately ſoftened at her conſtancy and fired with her injuries. He implored the aid of Heaven, for her, as well as for her brother; and while he heaped curſes on Celwold, he wiſhed for the means of immediate vengeance. He afterwards aſked ſome further queſtions, which the fellow, whoſe name was Robert, anſwered, as they had been put to him, collectively.

"Poverty," he replied, "has been the ſpring of my worſt actions, to ſoften—to atone for which I am now come to your Lordſhip as a penitent, who raiſes his head on ſhame and ſcarcely hopes to be forgiven. — Oh, I have witneſſed ſuch ſcenes ſince I entered into my contract

with the wealthy villain, that I ſhall never pardon myſelf for becoming the wretch I lately was. Lord Celwold, oppoſed moſt vehemently by William and his ſiſter, deputed me and a man of the name of Euſtace to watch over your unfortunate friend.—Ah, how great was his miſery when he was ſeparated from Lady Agatha! He fell ill, his veins ſwelled, the blood boiled in them, and the foot of death ſeemed to be near. Euſtace was ſuppoſed to be one of the moſt hardened raſcals that ever moved in the world. I had often ſeen him look with a deadly ſavageneſs on the priſoner, but one day while the unfortunate William was ſleeping, I diſcovered my fellow-guard weeping over him.—My aſtoniſhment was great, and I wondered that I had ſo long been deceived.—Made joyful by the diſcovery of this commiſeration, I threw myſelf upon my knees, preſſed the hand of Euſtace, and, pointing to the inſenſible captive,

captive, recommended him to his mercy (he being the head of Celwold's agents), and implored him to fruſtrate the accurſed deſigns of his enemy. But Euſtace daſhed me from him, and, with a contemptuous ſmile looked as if he ſuſpected my honeſty.

" In the courſe of a few days, however, his eye ſoftened, and calling me aſide, I found that my ſuſpicions had greatly wronged this ſingular man. ' Lord Celwold,' he cried, ' has ſent me to ſeek for you; he wants you to go as a meſſenger to his ſteward at Alwynd, on ſome preſſing concern.—I have examined your face and proved your ſincerity,—I firſt ſuſpected you of being an inſinuating ſcoundrel, but have ſince taken in ſome better opinions. I find you hate the wretch you ſerve as much as I do; and believe that, if wiſhes could ſend him to hell, you would readily ſtrengthen mine

with your own. When you are at Alwynd, I would have you go from thence to Bartonmere-Caſtle, find out Lord Mercia, tell him of the paſt deceits of his enemy;—tell him, beſides, that if he will return in privacy with you, I will contrive to put him into the arms of William and Agatha!'"

"God's bleſſings,—his choiceſt bleſſings on this Euſtace!" cried Mercia, with tranſport and energy.

"Euſtace left me immediately," ſaid Robert, "and I went to Lord Celwold, from whom I received the letter and many cautions and directions. I begged that he would allow me to ſpend a little hour with my deſerted wife and children, but it was long before he would agree to it; at length, however, he conſented, and, in order to make me more prompt in my ſervices, preſented me with a piece of

of gold to give to the wretched mother of my poor babes. I truſt I ſhall be pardoned for my ſubſequent perjuries.—I have delivered the letter to the ſteward, I have kiſſed my wife, and taken my children on my knees. Now, my Lord, I ſummon you to go with me,—to accept the favors of Euſtace, and, with the arms of love and friendſhip, to raiſe the objects of Celwold's tyranny from the depths of deſpair into which they have fallen!"

"You will be honeſt to me?"

"I will, by my Creator!—By my Saviour, I will!"

"It is enough. I will truſt you now, and better your fortunes hereafter. Oh, that on this occaſion I had wings to bear me through the air! — The lighteſt footed horſe will ſeem a ſluggard to me.

Return with me to Bartonmere. I will ſtay at the caſtle only a few minutes, and then away with you. Come, come, let us begone—each minute is now a little eternity."

Mercia ſtepped haſtily from the bank of the river, took up his ſtaff, recroſſed the bridge, and, followed by Robert, went over the moon-light meadows till he came to the caſtle.

Bartonmere and Mary had ſeen him go out like the hooded genius of melancholy; but he returned to them with briſkneſs in his ſteps, and with roſes in his cheeks. Having told them of all he had heard, he called on Robert to vouch for the truth of his extraordinary ſtory. Lord Bartonmere was transfixed in amazement; and Mary ſhrieked at the commencement of her ſudden ecſtacy. Mercia reſolved that his journey ſhould

ſhould begin immediately; and Bartonmere propoſed to accompany him, when Robert interpoſed, and told him that it muſt not be.

"Think not ill of me," he added, "for objecting to it, but if Lord Mercia has a ſingle attendant our project will aſſuredly fail. Euſtace is a ſecond maſter to Celwold's ſmall but deſperate party; and in a man of his occupation I never diſcovered ſo ſtrange a character. We muſt force nothing on one who has found the means even of humbling the creſt of Celwold. Allude not to his paſt actions, but treat him as if he were ſtill honourable. He has alleviated the ſufferings of thoſe who have ſo long been placed under him; and, my life on it, he will yet do more. Artifice, my Lord, will be better than force. The houſe is curiouſly conſtructed, and there are ſuch villains in its walls, that

the priſoners may be removed, and put away for ever, before any public ſearch can be made for them. I ſhall rejoice in your ſucceſſes, by my ſoul I ſhall. I love my wife, my children, dearly! yet I could almoſt ſacrifice one of them, if by ſo doing I could repair all your wrongs."

Mercia embraced his friend and trembling ſiſter, he then ruſhed out of the room; and he and Robert waſted that night as well as the following day in riding. Their horſes were ſo jaded and worn out that they left them behind, while they went the remainder of the way by water. The breezes blew kindly on the ſail; and at length Robert ſaid to Mercia, "Yonder ſtands the priſon of your friends."

It was evening when they left the veſſel. Robert placed his noble companion

panion in the hut of a peaſant till he had ſpoken to Lord Celwold; he then returned, and conducted him ſecretly to Euſtace, who received him at a private entrance, of which he alone had the charge.

Euſtace had a lamp in his hand; but his face was concealed more than ever, and his dark eye only once ſullenly glanced at Mercia, and then, for a moment, fell on the ground. The young traveller was ſtruck by the little that he ſaw of Euſtace's countenance; gratitude however filled his breaſt, and he claſped the hand of this new friend, while he poured forth his thanks.

"If you would have me ſerve you," ſaid Euſtace, "pray give me no ſoft words. I would rather hear the hiſſing of a thouſand arrows in a field of battle than ſounds like theſe. Perhaps in

ſerving you, I gratify myſelf; and, to ſpeak plainly and with ſincerity, no action ever gives me greater pleaſure than that."

"I would not, for the world, diſpleaſe you," ſaid Mercia, "but my heart is warm,—my emotions are quick. Tell me, did I never hear your voice before?"

"Were you ever in the northern part of England, before the age of ten?"

"No, I was not."

"Nor in Paleſtine ſince that period?"

"Indeed I was not."

"Then you never ſaw or heard me till this hour. Five and twenty years I lived with chriſtians, afterwards ſome ten or twelve with infidels, and by Mahomet! (he

(he will do for my preſent purpoſe) I ſwear I know not in which country villains moſt abound. Oh, there is a vigorous growth,—a moſt plentiful harveſt of them, under both hat and turban. This, however, relates not to your concerns, nor ſhall I now tell you why I ſpurn at the commands of Celwold to gratify a ſtranger. But I deſire you will not offer me the ſmalleſt reward; for I am ſomewhat proud, and ſuſceptible of offence; and I ſhall like you better, if you give me no more thanks for what I have done. Follow me, and I will lead you to your friend."

"Is he appriſed of my coming?"

"How could I tell that you yet exiſted? We are daily—hourly—momentarily flying from the world. We make the wing of the ſwallow ſeem lazy;—we dart into eternity as quick as the beams

beams of the ſun travel to the earth. Neither he nor Agatha know any thing of it. Follow me with a light ſtep, and keep your tongue without employment. —Come hither!"

He took the hand of Mercia, griped it like a man who puts aſide hatred, and returns with an impaſſioned heart to friendſhip. He then went on, and ſoon afterwards the impetuous tears of Mercia, rolled down the breaſt of the aſtoniſhed and almoſt incredulous William. The priſoner, thus ſurpriſed, grew almoſt frantic with joy; and he hung delighted on the neck of his friend, while he with ecſtacy exclaimed, "is the hour of my delivery at length arrived?"

"No," replied Euſtace, "it is yet to come. But why ſink you in a moment? It is ever thus with man; he craves, poſſeſſes,—craves ſtill more, and loſes

loſes what were good to be retained, by attempting to graſp beyond his reach or might. Theſe weakneſſes will degrade Alwynd's ſon; let me trace ſomething more noble in his conduct."

"Euſtace," ſaid William, "you were never immured in a place like this—you have been allowed to walk in the world, freely and without interruption."

"Have I not told you that I have been manacled, laſhed, and deſpiſed? Pray, good fellow, do not turn ſatiriſt, nor ſtrive to make my love of adventures run before my memory. I have brought a friend to you, and that is more than I could bring to myſelf, if poſted on the brow of the higheſt hill, that was ever piled up by God's own hand, I were to proclaim the want of one, with a trumpet that ſhould be heard from the extremity of the eaſt, even to the weſtern verge

verge of the earth. Enjoy the preſent hour, for at the commencement of the next you muſt part."

"Indeed!" cried Mercia, "muſt it be ſo ſoon? If you would have many and happy days—if the peace of the human mind be dear to you, drive me not hence before you bring Agatha to me. Shall I, Euſtace, ſhall I ſee her?"

"Perhaps you may—I will go a ſtep further. Be rational, and you *ſhall* ſee her within half an hour. Robert, be careful in your watchings, and warn your charge not to be too high ſounding in their ſpeeches."

He then retired, Robert ſtationed himſelf at the door, and William and Mercia renewed their embraces. They had ſo many queſtions to aſk of each other, that they both thought themſelves not

not ſufficiently anſwered. Moſt of their enquiries related to Mary and Agatha; and they were talking of the latter, when Euſtace returned, and put her into the arms of her agitated and almoſt breathleſs lover.

He ſaw her pale and nearly inſenſible.—Her fixed ſmile created alarm rather than delight, and ſeveral minutes elapſed before ſhe could either move or ſpeak.—William endeavoured to recal her reaſon, Mercia ſtrained her to his breaſt and kiſſed her cheek, on which he ſoon diſcovered reviving roſes.

"Is this illuſion?" ſhe cried, "tell me, who is it that now holds me?"

"Mercia! your adoring Mercia!—Let all my paſt ſufferings be forgotten in the felicity of the preſent moment. Surely I now know how great the happineſs of man

man can be!—By your eyes, Agatha, by the returning colour of your cheeks, I find I am not ſingle in my joys!—But poverty is impoſed on my tongue by the emotions of my heart; I feel what I cannot expreſs, and am delighted beyond my own report and your comprehenſion."

Euſtace now allowed them another opportunity for free communication, by retiring to the paſſage;—the new met friends availed themſelves of it, but they had ſcarcely time to ſpeak of their immediate ſituation, before Euſtace returned haſtily, telling them they muſt ſeparate on the inſtant.

William's countenance grew dull, Agatha again ſunk into deſpondency, and Mercia implored that he might not ſo ſoon be driven away.

"If

"If any of you oppoſe me," ſaid Euſtace, "my friendſhip will ceaſe and my ſervices be over. Robert, conduct Lord Mercia again to the cottage; and lady, you muſt creep ſoftly back with me to your chamber. Lord Celwold, I find, has either not been to reſt, or is diſturbed out of it;—let there be no oppoſition, for I muſt be obeyed, aye, and inſtantly too."

"But when ſhall I return?" enquired Mercia.

"To-morrow night, if it be practicable. Robert put the ſkirt of your habit around the lamp. Come, Agatha, come, delay not a minute, leſt the beaſt we ſport with ſhould ſuddenly ſpring upon and ſeize us."

"Brother, good night!—Adieu, dear Mercia!" cried Agatha, with a voice of tenderneſs and ſorrow.

Mercia

Mercia again preſſed her hand, but he was denied ſpeaking any farther; Robert hurried him away, Euſtace led Agatha back to her apartment and William was left to ruminate on this moſt unexpected event.

Euſtace and Robert, on the following morning, made ſome arrangements for the evening;—but, during the day, the former converſed nearly an hour with Celwold, reſpecting Agatha.

"Your eye, my Lord," he ſaid, "has of late been a moſt ſtern reprover;—ſtill I rejoice in having prevented an action that would have damned your name and ſoul for ever. Woman is, perhaps, the richeſt prize of man, let him, however, in his ventures for her, avoid all black artifices. That Agatha is perverſe I am willing to allow; but, conſidering her ſex, the quality I ſpeak of makes her not ſingular.

ſingular. You love her,—you ſhall poſſeſs her yet,—but you muſt firſt marry her."

"To-morrow,—this very day would I do ſo," cried Celwold, "did her inclinations correſpond with mine."

"Not ſo ſoon,—it cannot be,—within a month, however, you will have nothing further to wiſh for; but I muſt have your confidence or I will not act.—Leer ſuſpiciouſly and bend your brows at your fellows;—I will be treated differently. They are only dogs with ſome uncommon inſtincts; I am a man and will not be abuſed."

"By my ſoul you ſhall not!"

"By my ſoul I *will* not. I have been accuſtomed to walk erect and conſcious of all my qualities. The brute creation would

would be nearly doubled were nature merely to transform two of the limbs of thoſe beings, who lie, moſt darkly, when they ſpeak of their firſt father.—It is my wiſh to ſee you as happy as you deſerve to be, and if the poſſeſſion of Agatha can make you ſo, it ſhall not be long before you confeſs it to me."

"But by what means?—What cauſe have you for theſe new hopes?"

"Leave every thing to me, and be ready for the event. I have ſaid it ſhall be done, and it ſhall. Yet, my Lord, I muſt ſmile at your impatience.—Why did you not marry Mercia's widow?"

"Lightnings ſinge and vultures prey upon the witch!" exclaimed Celwold, —"I would have a new hell hollowed purpoſely for the ſtrumpet."

"A

"A pleaſant conceit," ſaid Euſtace, laughing, "and expreſſed with a good chriſtian enthuſiaſm! Were the winds capable of bearing it to the ears of Githa, what a maſſacre of Frenchmen would there be while her fit laſted!—Good day to your Lordſhip, for I have buſineſs for my hands. If you are averſe to ſolitude, ſend one of your fellows to the prieſt who is pricking his lazy mule over the bridge. Mercy, how the ſtorm pelts him!—And what a ſtring of anathemas hangs from his righteous lips!—Were my head not ſo much like that of an oſtrich, this object might draw ſome concluſions from me. Your Lordſhip has more capacity, and therefore I leave you to be critical with him."

Celwold was then better pleaſed with Euſtace than he had been for a conſiderable time before. Though he was a hypocrite

hypocrite himſelf, and generally awake to the artifices of others, yet Euſtace had completely duped him, and he actually expected all that was promiſed. He now thought of his own reward, and of that to which Euſtace would be entitled. His mind grew warm upon the aſſurance—the images that filled it were bold and glowing; and on the entrance of one of his men, he quickly retired to a more private room, in order that he might receive no interruption in his mental repaſt.

Mercia, as well as Agatha and her brother, longed for the approach of night; and his heart bounded with pleaſure when Robert came to the cottage to conduct him to the caſtle. He found no obſtacle to his entrance. Robert led him immediately to William; and it was not long before Agatha was brought to him. She was, in ſpite of her captivity,

tivity, conſidered by him as a redeemed treaſure, which he knew not how to prize according to its value. Her looks were improved. Mercia gazed on her with admiration, but love did not baniſh his gratitude; and as ſoon as ſhe had removed herſelf from his arms, with the livelieſt emotions he preſſed the hand of Euſtace, from whoſe eye, to his aſtoniſhment, he extracted a tear, which however was ſoon ſwept away by indignation.

"Be not aſhamed of that which is honourable, my friend," ſaid Mercia.—"You have daſhed upon the floor a gem more precious than any that all the known mines can produce,—a pearl that would have added to the beauty of humanity's boſom. I wonder, Euſtace, while I look on you.—There lives a ſpirit within your breaſt that would have ſuited the nobleſt of employments, and yet in how different an one do I find you!—

you!—There muſt be ſome treaty between us; I want to make you my friend. My houſe, my table, my purſe I would have you partake, and that moſt freely, and in ſuch terms as ſubſiſt among generous brothers. I cannot ſuppoſe that you have ſummoned me to a tranſitory happineſs, merely to baniſh me hereafter into eternal miſery;—you muſt have other deſigns, and I gueſs at them. In the name of God, I charge you to take us hence to-morrow night, and guide us in ſafety back to Bartonmere."

"Mercia," replied Euſtace, "that I can never do. Bad as my actions have been, I ſtill believe there is a God—ſtill fear him! I have bent my knees at the altar, preſſed my lips upon the ſacred volume, and ſworn never to open the gates to the priſoners of Celwold."

"Then

"Then we are doomed to perish here!" cried Agatha, in extreme agony.

"Hold, Lady!" said Euſtace, "and let caution teach you to ſpeak with a lower voice. I ſhould not have diſpatched Robert to Lord Mercia, had it not been for ſome words, of which I took particular notice. William, you once told me what your firſt action ſhould be, if you could obtain your liberty; perhaps you forget it not, and will declare it again."

"I told you, Euſtace, that I would remain in uncertainty, no longer than I remained in captivity;—that, after ſuch time, fear ſhould not direct me—that I would go to the king, declare my birth to him, and truſt to his mercy, without previouſly appealing to it."

"Would you have your brother do as he propoſed, had he the preſent means?" ſaid Euſtace, turning to Agatha.

"I think I would—yet I know not—oh, I might have everlaſting cauſe to curſe my aſſent to it!"

"And what do you, Lord Mercia, ſay to the project of your friend?"

"I applaud it; I wiſh he was allowed to execute it immediately. If the king were to deſign aught of evil againſt him, I would, moſt earneſtly endeavour to ſnatch him from it; and afterwards fly with him and my Agatha, to realms far diſtant from that in which ſo cruel a tyrant ſhould wear a crown."

"Alwynd is worthy of ſuch a friend," cried Euſtace, "and Agatha of ſuch a huſband! Now liſten to me, while I declare

declare all that I intend to do—all that I can ever perform. I love to ſee the blaze of ſpirit! it is as precious to my eyes, as the radiance of the ſetting ſun is to him who has juſt recovered his ſight. I confeſs that the children of Alwynd ought not to be immured in a place like this. Laſt night, in my ſleep, I thought their father, bony and erect, came from the grave, and ſmote me on the cheek with his rattling hand. Lord Mercia, do you return to Bartonmere; take the papers on which your friends build their title, to the king; tell him of the treachery of Celwold, and direct him to the place where the offspring of Matilda may be diſcovered."

"And what if he ſhould tear them to the ſcaffold? Anſwer me, friend?—William—Agatha!——"

"To the ſcaffold! For what? By the power that gave us all life, I would rather ſtab them both to the heart, than ſee them ſo ſacrificed. The king loved his ſiſter; once in every year he mourns for her moſt piouſly, and I think he will protect her children, not deſtroy them. Go this very night, and be quick in the buſineſs. Till we hear from you, I will continue to act as I have done with Celwold's captives. Your ſucceſs will, perhaps create the laſt pleaſure that ſhall ever enter into my heart; but ſhould you be diſappointed, I will ſtrive to ward off the blow of danger, and fly with you all from England."

"Go, Mercia," cried William, "for my ſentiments accord with thoſe of Euſtace. Let us hear from you as ſoon as poſſible; and make your friend either better than he is, or eternally forgetful of having been any thing. Agatha, be compoſed,

compoſed, bid adieu to our meſſenger, and truſt to the aſſurances of Euſtace."

After taking a farewel, the tenderneſs of which was confeſſed by every eye, Mercia was conducted out of the manſion by Robert.

Early in the morning he began his journey to Bartonmere. When he arrived there he ſpoke of his deſigns, which alarmed Mary more than her hoſt; and, having collected the papers, he did not allow himſelf a ſingle day's reſt, but went, without delay, to the court of his ſovereign, and entreated a private audience, which was granted to him.

For a few minutes irreſolution pained his heart, and bound his tongue. At length, however, he ſpoke to the king, who ſtarted at the name of Alwynd, and confined himſelf to the treachery and

baſeneſs of Celwold. But it was neceſſary to explain further, and he found himſelf unfit for the office. In extreme agitation he confeſſed his love for Alwynd's daughter; he then put the documents into the hands of the king, who retired to peruſe them, and whoſe countenance, Mercia, when next admitted to the honours of an interview, knew not how to read perfectly. Amazement and anxiety were ſtamped on it. His eyes were red with either ſmothered rage or grief, and to the great ſurpriſe of Mercia, he commanded him to return to the place he came from, and there to wait for him in privacy.

Mercia could diſcover none of the monarch's ſentiments. He returned, filled with alternate hopes and apprehenſions, to his friends, whoſe ſpirits fell when they were informed that the king was coming to them in perſon.

ſon. Agatha, more fearful than any other, again implored Euſtace to favour their eſcape, but ſhe found him ſtill inexorable; and William declared that he would not go beyond the gates, even if they were ſet open for him to paſs.

They all ſpent a truly anxious night, and to their aſtoniſhment, the king arrived on the following day. But their ſurpriſe was comparatively ſmall; Celwold was involved in wonder and confuſion, and received his royal viſiter moſt awkwardly. Robert was diſpatched by Euſtace to Mercia, who repaired immediately to the manſion, and concealed himſelf in one of the remote apartments, in order that he might attend more readily, when it ſhould be proper for him ſo to do.

The coming of the king occaſioned much confuſion among the ſervants; and Celwold could ſcarcely prevent their inſtant departure. He knew not what anſwer to make, when it was firſt aſked of him, whether William and Agatha were yet in his cuſtody. At length however he replied they were; when he was commanded to ſay who their parents were, and on what grounds he had ſo long detained them.

At that moment Mercia entered, and the villain, with faulty pulſe and a face deſpicably pale, recoiled from him. But he was again deſired to attend to the queſtions that had been aſked, and after ſome further heſitation he complied.

"The unworthy objects of whom your Majeſty ſpeaks," he ſaid, "are ſtill in my power. Their mother could not be otherwiſe than honourable, becauſe ſhe

ſhe was a princeſs of Britain; but their father ſported too freely with his reputation when he ſeduced Matilda from her duty. Their offspring, my liege, I almoſt bluſh to ſpeak of. The pride of the daughter is exceſſive—the ambition of the ſon bold and truly dangerous.—Filled with their own greatneſs, and aided by Mercia, in whom no truſt ſhould be repoſed, they have deſigned a conſpiracy; and Alwynd's ſon has often wiſhed his uncle, as well as the young prince, in heaven, and himſelf upon the throne of England. I thought it my duty to ſecure this dangerous and miſguided youth, and all that I have done in the buſineſs was to preſerve my ſovereign from inſult and injury."

"Oh, ſinful and accurſed!" exclaimed the wonder-ſtricken Mercia. — "Moſt abominable ſlanderer!—May I ever be

an alien from God's kingdom, if theſe are not the fouleſt of lies!"

"Lord Celwold," ſaid the king, "were all my peers like you, I ſhould be proud of them indeed. Send for the priſoners inſtantly—let me ſee the hero that would ſnatch at my crown. Diſpatch! Diſpatch!—I am as hot for vengeance as Alwynd's ſon is for prerogative. Go for them yourſelf, my Lord; inſtantly too, and ſuffer me to remain as ſhort a time as poſſible in ſuſpenſe."

Mercia's heart grew cold—Euſtace's eye fell on the floor—neither of them dared to ſpeak; and while the exulting Celwold went for his captives, the face of every perſon he had left behind was marked by fear, dread, and expectation. Soon afterwards a noiſe was heard, and Agatha ruſhed into the room at the front of Celwold and her brother.

"Where

"Where is the king?" ſhe cried, "where is the king?—Let me kneel at his feet, and appeal to his humanity. Oh, royal ſir! I bend diſtractedly before you!—What have we done, and what are our offences?—I know of none—I never did you aught of injury; and yet this wretch has juſt now ſaid, that you are come here purpoſely for our blood. Our blood!—It cannot be—I will not believe it!"

"Matilda!" exclaimed the king,—"Surely it is Matilda!"

"No, no, I am her poor and miſerable daughter!—A perſecuted and heart-broken wretch!—This is my brother—and may heaven deal with you as you ſhall deal with him. Do any thing with me—drive me naked into beggary—ſhut me in a cell, and leave me ſlowly to

to periſh—but ſpare my brother!—Save him!—Save him!"

"Save him!" exclaimed the king.—"What, ſuffer a traitor to be at large—a wretch, who craves my honours, and conſpires againſt my life?"

"A traitor!" cried William.—"Conſpire againſt your life!—God of truth and righteouſneſs!—Who has ſaid this of me?"

"Celwold—a man who loves and reſpects me—the flower of our nobility, that ſhall not hereafter bloom without great diſtinction."

"That ſhall wither and criſp where the ſun's body could not cauſe a fiercer heat!" cried Agatha.—"Is there no fear in man, and ſerves his maker only for deriſion?—Shews it like treaſon, when my

my brother calls on his king to reſcue him from the cruelty and oppreſſion of a private, but deſtructive enemy—from one, who to robbery would perhaps have added murder!—Reſt, reſt, my father! and come not on the earth to pine, though fate ſhould enſnare your children."

"Agatha!" cried the king, riſing and going towards her, "Agatha, this upright, loyal lord has declared your conduct to be ſuch, that you ſhall experience ——"

"What, what, my liege?—Be merciful as you are great. Oh, tell me what I ſhall experience?"

"My favour, my protection, my countenance and love!—Thus, taking you to my breaſt, I ſwear they are already your's, my Agatha!—they are your's,

your's, ſweet daughter of the lamented Matilda!"

"Are theſe bleſſings real or imaginary?—They *are* real, and my ear was not deceived. On my knees will I ſend forth my gratitude. Oh, royal uncle! how ſhall my heart repay you?—But my brother?"

"He is now Earl of Alwynd, and ſhall be greater hereafter. Take my hand, dear boy! as an earneſt of it.—My reſentments are paſt—I almoſt forget that I ever had any. You muſt love the prince, who is to be my ſucceſſor; and you ſhall ever remain in my heart and favour."

"Ever, my gracious ſovereign!" cried William, "ever will I be your true, your loyal, and your loving ſubject.—Your ear has been abuſed, indeed it has, moſt

moſt ſhamefully abuſed!—May I become an object of your ſcorn, if the allegations of Celwold, of him who now bends his head in ſhame before you, are not falſe and abominable. My evidences are but few—they can however come in my behalf to your Majeſty, with faces ſuch as honeſt men ſhould wear. My father loved you, my liege, by my ſoul, he loved you truly!—and let me never go where he now dwells, if the affections which I have profeſſed to feel are leſs ſincere. Puniſh me, heaven, as much as man can be puniſhed for ſins too great for pardon, if I ever were, or ever ſhall become a traitor to a virtuous king!"

"Boy! what are you doing with my heart?—You ſhall aid my counſels, and fight my battles.—Come to my arms again. Agatha, your love muſt not be wholly given to Mercia; your uncle claims,

claims, and is intitled to a part of it. Let all who are now around me, learn that this is Earl Alwynd, and my nephew—this the daughter of my ſiſter, and my niece—and this her approved and deſtined huſband. Now, Celwold, I muſt turn to you; and never did my eyes encounter a more abhorred object. Before I ſaw the children of Matilda, I diſcovered that your ſoul was black and treacherous. The ſtory of their parents had previouſly ſoftened my heart, and none of your calumnies could reach it."

The king drew Agatha nearer to him, and continued his ſpeech to Celwold.

"You have been exemplary in vice, and exemplary ſhall be your puniſhment. I do not merely ſay that you ſhall crave pardon of thoſe whom you have ſo baſely injured, and make reſtitution of their property—no, that would be ſtopping

ping much too ſoon. The name of Briton ought not to pertain to you—you diſgrace our country, and ſhall fly from it. If you be found in my realm at the commencement of the enſuing month, I will not only pardon, but alſo reward, any man who ſhall lay your head at my feet."

"I beſeech—I implore your majeſty to hear me!"

"Not a word; your crimes are too manifeſt. You have heard the ſentence, and let your own diſcretion tell you how you ought to act hereafter. Come, my children, for ſuch I muſt now conſider you, we will be gone immediately; our horſes will carry us to the caſtle of Sir Walter Mowbray, which is but a few miles diſtant, and there we will procure further aid. The day on which I became the king of my noble people, was not more

more joyful than this. William, lead the way to the gates, and lend me your arm, my girl!"

They then left the wretched Celwold, ſtanding among his fellows, almoſt in a ſtate of ſtupefaction. Mercia, who followed his friends, took hold of the arms of Robert and Euſtace, and ſtopped to ſpeak with them in the hall, while the royal traveller and his attendants were mounting their ſteeds. He put a purſe of ſome value into the hands of Robert, and deſired him to return immediately to his wife and children, and to expect a permanent reward for his paſt ſervices.

Mercia then embraced the late governor of William's priſon, and aſked in what manner he intended to diſpoſe of himſelf. The eye of Euſtace almoſt frightened the enquirer, who was not anſwered for ſeveral minutes.

"I

"I cannot tell you," he at length replied, "in what manner I ſhall diſpoſe of myſelf. There is a miſt before me, and no ſun to diſpel it. For a while I ſhall remain here; but for what reaſon I pray you do not ask me. Mercia, I have ſinned againſt you—I never ſhall forgive myſelf, and all I fear is, that you will curſe me as long as you continue to live."

"You are deceived. God bleſs you, Euſtace!"

"On your knees, repeat it on your knees. You bend, I hear again your prayer! Now I am ſatisfied. My heart would burſt were I to ſtay with you another minute. Oh, farewel! From this moment we are loſt to each other for ever!"

Mercia

Mercia could not detain him; he rushed out of the hall, and the young Earl's eyes were filled with tears, when he overtook the party that had preceded him.

After his departure, Euſtace ſucceeded in ſoothing his paſſions, and went to Celwold, whom he found almoſt as cold and ſenſeleſs as a ſtatue, and ſurrounded by men, who murmured at their own diſappointments.

"What are you," ſaid Euſtace, "that thus you ſtand as if you were formed out of a rock? What, oh! my Lord, why do you not ſpeak to me? Man cannot look upon a ſight like this without amazement. You have eyes, and know not the uſe of them; ears that exclude all ſound, and ſeemingly, a body from which breath has departed for ever. Anſwer me. What are you?"

"A

"A wretch! A loſt—an abandoned wretch! Euſtace, let me reſt my head upon your ſhoulder. Oh, I can ſink no lower—no lower than this!"

"You are baniſhed, it is true, my Lord, but what of that? There are other places in the world, infinitely to be preferred to this paltry iſland—this ſpot of damps and fogs, where a ſunny day employs every man in telling his neighbour that ſuch it is. Oh, you ſhould ſee the plains of France, the lovely ſcenes of Italy and Spain, and many other parts of the globe where I have travelled with bliſtered feet. Look up, my Lord. The world is ſtill before you, and ſomething may be attained, better than any thing that you now poſſeſs. Revive, and forget not that great capabilities are lodged within you, and that you bear the name of man."

"I

"I am capable of nothing—can attain nothing,—I have already advanced ſome way into perdition, and there is no retreating. My own vices have enſnared me,—I have gone beyond the mark of redemption, and muſt encounter ruin whichever way I turn.—Oh, I could do ſomething deſperate to free myſelf from my preſent miſeries! Give me a ſword,—a club to daſh out my brains,—any inſtrument that will deſtroy for ever the ſenſe of my wretchedneſs."

"You talk franticly," cried Euſtace, "and your complaints are puerile—Curſe what you dread and laugh at your preſent diſtreſſes;—he who is truly a man would neither heave a ſigh nor drop a tear at a fate like your's. Before you will be compelled to ſail from Britain, nearly a month has to elapſe, and, during that time, you may gather in your fortunes, at leaſt ſome part of them, and make

make arrangements for your departure.—France, I think, would afford you the beſt aſylum, and thither would I have you repair. After you have croſſed the channel, aſſume ſome other name, ſtick a white plume in your cap, and force the gallic daws to reſpect you. Theſe men that ſtand around you, theſe honeſt, worthy fellows, will be anxious to accompany you.—I ſee it in their faces,—their eager eyes confeſs it, and I beſeech you not to turn from their ſolicitations; they only wiſh to wait upon you, they will ſpurn at rewards ſhould you offer them any."

"Flatter me not, Euſtace, I charge you. Anxious to accompany me, do you ſay?—See how they turn from me;—mark their ſullenneſs and diſſatisfaction. No, no, the unfortunate have none to page their heels!"

"In

"In faith, they seem to have no stomach for it," said Eustace, "and I fear my own want of discrimination.—Oh, interested rascals!—Self-loving knaves!—While the hand feeds you it shall be kissed, but when it lacks provision you would smile to see the lightnings blast it. Heap a curse on them, my Lord, and turn from them for ever. You shall not go singly into exile; I will be your servant—your slave. The breeze that wafts you from England shall also blow upon me;—I will link my fate with your's, and we will live and die together."

"The passages of my heart are open. Eustace, I thank you, even with my tears I thank you!"

"Then my services are accepted, and I know what I have to perform. I said I would be your slave, but distinctions must

muſt not ſubſiſt if you would have me act with kindneſs towards you. I ſhall conſider you merely as a man, while I render you the ſervices of a man.—Open your arms, my Lord, and let me ſwear fidelity upon your breaſt!—There, I preſs you now as I have long wiſhed, and can you not believe in theſe aſſurances?"

"Oh, God!" exclaimed Celwold, ſinking on the floor, "you have—you have ſtabbed me to the heart!"

"Once—twice—What! will not the third ſtroke finiſh you? — Damnable villain! you ſurely have a plurality of lives. Before your ſight fails for ever look upon me.—See, my eye has an uninjured fellow—my face is unſcarred—and I can wipe off this dark complexion with the greateſt eaſe. Do you not know me, fiend?—Oh, yes, I ſee you do!—Mercia's widow triumphs and is

revenged!—There is another blow.—Now, get you to the common hell; and aſk, if, according to your wiſh, a new one has been hollowed for me."

Celwold groaned, writhed, and died. His murdereſs placed her foot upon, and laughed over his body. The men who were preſent were filled with horror and ſurpriſe, they could ſcarcely believe that ſhe was the perſon ſhe confeſſed herſelf to be; but after ſhe had thrown off ſome of her diſguiſes, their doubts were at an end, and they gathered around her. None of them however dared to touch her, for ſhe ſnatched the dagger from the wound of Celwold, and poiſed it boldly in her defence.

"Thoſe who are wiſe," ſhe cried, "will not exaſperate me. Death has inveſted my hand; and, though I am a woman, where is the man that ſhall dare to

to oppoſe me in an hour like this?—My ſtory may have been heard by ſome of you; and were not the reſt too deſpicable, I would myſelf inform them of it. I know how eaſy it would be to expiate this offence, and to remove all ſtains from my name, as well as from the hands that did the deed. Is there any thing that the clergy and gold cannot effect?—The prieſt may be a precious villain; money is formed out of a precious metal, and if it be dropped here and there, raſcals ſhall riſe, as if it were by vegetation. Here is the poniard that ripped open the body of the accurſed wretch, who ought to have died ſooner. Acting as I intend to do hereafter, all of you will exclaim, 'Oh, ſinful deed!—Oh, dreadful murdereſs!'—But had I reſorted to my treaſure, ſaying to the maſon,—'Take hence what will be ſufficient to build a monaſtery, in which

I will put, and alſo feed, an hundred holy men, to pray for the ſoul of him whom I have ſlain, as well as for my own,' had I ſaid this—ſeen the fabric reared —placed the hoary cheats in the ſecretly ſupplied cells of ſanctity and abſtinence —had I gone thither only once a year, kneeled at a baby toy, and looked dejected, what had been ſaid of me then? —Oh, I ſhould have been praiſed and pitied for the remainder of my life; and, after my death, every lying monk would tell the world that he ſaw me paſs the ſtation of Saint Peter!"

"You ſhall not eſcape without puniſhment, impious woman!" cried one of the men.—"Lord Celwold was baniſhed by his king, but not condemned to your inhuman hands; and your blood ſhall anſwer for that which you have ſpilt."

"Pray,

"Pray, ſir, ſtoop, and let me look upon the crown of your head. Where is your badge of office, mighty and venerable judge?—You find I will not compromiſe, and therefore will abate nothing of your rigour; yet I would ſtake my life, that there is not a man among you all who would decline my terms of purchaſe. Well, ſir, you are welcome to make whatever uſe of my body you pleaſe; do not however miſconſtrue my words with indecency, but rather take them up with the ſenſe of a magiſtrate. Now I ſurrender myſelf—give me death, and fix me on a gibbet. Oh, the very grinnings of my parched face would frighten twenty men, whoſe valor ſhould be twenty times greater than your own."

"Seize on her!—Shut her in the cells!" was the general cry.

"Away, ye naſty villains!" ſhe cried, "and ſtain a whole river with your filthy hands before you offer to place them on me. Decency and authority ſhould ever go together; but you are alike ignorant and vile. Look on me, and learn adminiſtration — obſerve me well. Was the thing that is called a culprit ſet in the front of me, and I were appointed to decide his fate, then would I ſtand, as I do now, calm and erect—my eye, as it is in the preſent moment, ſhould be ſtrong, but not impaſſioned—and if the voices around me were to call for condemnation, I would debaſe the wretch no further, but ſtretching forth my arm, and making big my nerves, I would ſilence him for ever by means like theſe."

Her dagger was inſtantly buried, even to the hilt, in her body; and ſhe

ſhe died as ſoon as it was removed by the fellows.

When the death of his mother was reported to Mercia, he was divided between horror and amazement. He would not believe in what he heard, till he returned to the ſpot where ſhe had periſhed; and where he found her cold, ſtiff, and ſtill in male attire.

Having identified her perſon, he blinded himſelf with his hand, and ran from obſervation. All malice—all enmity was forgotten. He curſed the daughter of paſſion no more, he threw himſelf on his knees, and devoutly implored God to admit her into Heaven, and to give her his pardon there.

The ſofteſt conſolation that he afterwards found, came from Agatha, of

whom, before the ſummer months were over, he became a joyful huſband.

William had not long to ſigh for the want of happineſs. His royal uncle, for a while, oppoſed his union with Mary, wiſhing him to ſeek for an object of purer birth and diſtinction. But when her qualities were better known, no prejudices remained. Her virtues placed her high in the eſtimation of her former cenſurer, and he preſented her, as no mean gift, to him who truly deſerved her. While the king lived, it was his chief pleaſure to be near his ſiſter's children, who, after his deceaſe, were equally noticed and reſpected by his ſucceſſor.

William and Mercia ſtill fondly loved the rural ſhades of Alwynd, whither they frequently repaired with their fair aſſociates.

ciates. Their boſoms often met the affectionate breaſt of Bartonmere, who having ſpent a long and honourable life, died in their arms, and was truly lamented by them.

Connubial love brought forth the ſweeteſt bloſſoms, and while they were expanding under the ſun of proſperity, and viſited by the breezes of health, Mercia and his friend were dealing out charities around them, and doing the beſt of ſervices to the ſtate.

The cave of Martyn of Fenroſe was ever regarded with ſolemnity, particularly by William, who, in his evening rambles, frequently gazed on it, till he thought he ſaw the wizard, wild in his aſpect, and towering in his height, coming through the paſſage, in order to walk amid the airs that blew over the heath.

His

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